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GERMAN ANTI-GUERRILLA OPERATIONS IN YUGOSLAVIA, 1941-1943

by

© JAMES PAUL KLINGLE

A THESIS

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ABSTRACT

From early July 1941 until the end of the war, German military forces, together with various allied and quisling supporters, battled against mounting insurrection in Yugoslavia. Four undersized German "700-level" divisions with overaged and undertrained troops formed the nucleus of forces which participated in five major anti-guerrilla operations between 1941 to 1943. From July 1941 to November 1942, they were the only German units stationed in Yugoslavia, aside from units temporarily deployed in the area.

This study attempts to examine the response of these 700-level divisions, and the German Army generally, to growing insurgency in Yugoslavia by focusing on the major anti-guerrilla operations carried out in the area. In the course of the first chapter the Axis invasion and dismemberment of Yugoslavia are discussed with an emphasis upon the Axis and quisling forces deployed in the region.

Chapter Two briefly outlines the origins and development of the two major Yugoslav resistance groups, and their role in the initial outbreak of insurrection during the summer of 1941. The bulk of the chapter will focus on the three major anti-guerrilla operations carried out during 1941 and 1942. Although these operations inflicted serious losses on the Partisans, the Germans had already spent their best chances to destroy the Partisans by the end of 1942.

The three major anti-guerrilla operations of 1943 are the subject of the third chapter. In these operations the Germans massed the largest concentration of military forces ever assembled for combatting insurgency in Yugoslavia. The Partisans, by then the greatest political and military threat to the continued Axis hold on

Yugoslavia, again eluded annihilation, despite sustaining horrible casualties. The Germans undertook one more major anti-guerrilla operation in 1944, but by then Axis control in Yugoslavia was slipping.

The conclusion of this study suggests that no one Axis or quisling force should be held responsible for the failure of the major anti-guerrilla operations. The Germans' most serious mistake was perhaps their great underestimation of the Partisans' tactical skill, which led them to neglect any serious study of the enemy's methods. The various allied and quisling forces were, generally, inadequate for battling against insurgents, with many being of even lower quality than the German 700-level divisions. The Partisans' eventual victory in Yugoslavia, a result which must be credited largely to their superlative Communist leadership, was quite an accomplishment. However, it could scarcely have succeeded had it not been for the assistance of the Soviet Army, and, certainly, the Yugoslav insurgents would never have survived into 1942 if the German Army had not been heavily committed on other fronts.

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INTRODUCTION

German anti-guerrilla activities in wartime Yugoslavia is a subject which has traditionally received scant attention by historians. Yet in many respects this oversight is scarcely surprising. Despite the outbreak of insurrection in Yugoslavia during June 1941, and its continued escalation until May 1945, the German High Command never regarded Yugoslavia as anything more than a minor war theater. In October 1943, when there were 177 German divisions on the Eastern Front alone, the entire Balkans region contained only 20 German infantry, SS, and mountain divisions.[1] Certainly on the basis of the number of German troops deployed, Yugoslavia must be considered a secondary war theater.

A second and perhaps even more significant reason for the lack of studies in this field has been a widespread overemphasis upon the study of guerrilla warfare in general at the expense of more thorough investigations in the field of counter-insurgency. The great imbalance in the amount of work done in these two closely related fields is nowhere as evident as when one reflects on the absolutely voluminous outpouring in guerrilla warfare manuals and histories of greatly varied qualities during the 1950's and 1960's. A large proportion of this guerrilla warfare literature, much of which reflected the widespread overestimation that the postwar world placed on the role of guerrilla warfare tactics in winning the Second World War, often illustrated basic guerrilla warfare theories with real life examples from the exploits of the Partisans in Yugoslavia. The Partisans were a popular choice among guerrilla historians in the 1950's and 1960's since they,

in Walter Laqueur's words, were "one of the few cases in history in which a partisan movement liberated a country and seized power largely without outside help."[2]

Yugoslavia's unique position in the historical annals of guerrilla warfare, together with the only recently interrupted decades of rule by Partisan leader Josip Broz Tito in post-war Yugoslavia, have greatly influenced studies on Partisan warfare in Yugoslavia. The result of this is that Partisan warfare is now fully documented. It appears that the overshadowing of German anti-guerrilla activities in Yugoslavia is due chiefly to the postwar popularity of guerrilla warfare and that the secondary nature of the war theater in Yugoslavia is of lesser importance.

At present there are only two historical studies which deal in any direct way with German anti-guerrilla activities in Yugoslavia. The first, a U.S. Department of the Army Historical Study, German Antiguerrilla Operations in the Balkans 1941-1944, is a pamphlet which provides a short but excellent summary of the attack by the Axis powers on Yugoslavia, its division among the victors, and the establishment of Axis military and political administration. In addition, the pamphlet discusses the outbreak of insurgency in Yugoslavia and briefly describes each of what Yugoslav historians collectively call the "Seven Major Enemy Offensives".[3] However, as the title of the pamphlet clearly denotes, this study is only a general account of German anti-guerrilla activities in the Balkans, and while it is a very useful, unprejudiced work there are certain aspects of the study which are, after twenty-odd years, rather dated.

The second study which directly concerns itself with German

anti-guerrilla operations in Yugoslavia is Paul N. Hehn's The German Struggle Against Yugoslav Guerrillas in World War Two: German Counter-Insurgency in Yugoslavia, 1941-43. This work is actually Hehn's English translation of a report compiled in 1944 by a German military archivist, Ernst Wisshaupt, for the Chief of Staff of the Supreme Command Southeast. The report, originally entitled "The Combatting of the Insurrectionary Movement in the Southeast Area", discusses the German military's response to escalating insurgency in Yugoslavia during 1941 and 1942. However, the report is dated and there are serious problems with Hehn's English version. He makes significant errors in his translation of German military terms into English, and too often renders German into awkward English. Finally, the title of the book is misleading, since Wisshaupt's report only covers the period from June 1941 to August 1942. As a result of these deficiencies, Hehn's translation is of no real value to the present study.

While not dealing specifically with German anti-guerrilla operations, Jozo Tomasevich's The Chetniks: War and Revolution in Yugoslavia, 1941-1945 must receive special mention for its excellent, thorough, and balanced account of events in wartime Yugoslavia. Although the focus of the study is chiefly on the Chetniks, Tomasevich also provides an enormous amount of valuable information on the other military forces in Yugoslavia, including the Germans and their major anti-guerrilla operations. This work has, therefore, been of great assistance in the preparation of this thesis.

It is apparent that there is room for study in the field of German anti-guerrilla activities in Yugoslavia and that even attempting

to discover why Tito's Partisans were able to drive the Germans out of Yugoslavia makes such a study worthwhile. The purpose of this thesis is to discuss major German-led anti-guerrilla activities carried out against Yugoslav insurgents, to evaluate these activities in terms of their strategic and tactical strengths and weaknesses, to speculate as to the reasons for the German inability to put down insurrection in Yugoslavia, and, lastly, to briefly consider what changes, if any, could have resulted in a German military victory over insurgency in Yugoslavia.

The combatting of insurgency in Yugoslavia frequently involved the temporary use of crack German units to bolster the inadequate German forces in Yugoslavia. However, there were four German "700-level" divisions which were stationed together in Yugoslavia from June 1941, until April 1943.[4] It is because of their lengthy period of duty in Yugoslavia, a period during which these divisions were chiefly engaged in fighting insurgency, that this study will be focused upon these four divisions.

The intention of the first chapter of this study will be to discuss the invasion and division of Yugoslavia by Axis forces while providing background information on the various military units engaged in the Yugoslav sector, particularly on the German divisions and their various non-German support organizations. The second chapter will focus briefly upon the origins and development of the two major Yugoslav resistance groups and their role in the initial outbreak of insurrection during the summer of 1941. The majority of this chapter will be devoted to discussing the major German-led anti-guerrilla operations of 1941 and 1942. Most of the third chapter of this study will consist of describing the three major anti-guerrilla operations of

1943, the largest such operations to take place in Yugoslavia. The conclusion will very briefly discuss events in Yugoslavia between 1944 and 1945, followed by a short summation of the various factors which caused the failure of the major anti-guerrilla operations and, ultimately, the collapse of the Axis-occupation system in Yugoslavia. Finally, some consideration will be given to what the German Army might have done to have possibly achieved a military victory over insurgency.

German military units in Yugoslavia were almost constantly engaged in anti-guerrilla operations of one form or another, whether on a large scale involving several divisions or a minor operation requiring only one battalion. The amount of information in this field is, therefore, absolutely enormous, but the documenting of a good many of these anti-guerrilla operations would be neither a useful nor realistic exercise. For this reason the focus of this study will be chiefly upon describing each of the major German-led anti-guerrilla operations carried out from 1941 to 1943. While these operations are looked upon by Partisan historians as decisive moral victories by the Partisans, they are also important from the German perspective. Michael R. Foot writes that these operations represented "a substantial diversion of resources, petrol, and emotional effort from the main fronts on which the Wehrmacht was engaged.[5]

This study of German anti-guerrilla activities in Yugoslavia is clearly not the first nor last word on the subject. Recent world interest in Yugoslavia, sparked by what the future holds for a Yugoslavia without Tito at its helm, has stirred up renewed interest in Yugoslavia's strong guerrilla tradition. This has, in turn, led to

reflections on methods used by enemy invaders in attempting to gain control of the country. If this study goes even a small way towards correcting the imbalance of accounts by and about the Yugoslav insurgents, accounts which the study is, however, immeasurably indebted to, then it will have achieved its purpose.

NOTES FOR INTRODUCTION

[1]Kriegstagebuch des Overkommandos des Wehrmacht, III/1 (January 1, 1943 - December 31, 1943), ed. Walther Hubatsch (Frankfurt on Main: Bernard & Graefe Verlag für Wehrwesen, 1963), p. 1514; U.S. Department of the Army Historical Study, German Anti-guerrilla Operations in the Balkans (1941-1944); (Alexandria, Virginia: U.S. National Archives, August, 1954), p. 50.

[2]Walter Laqueur, Guerrilla: A Historical and Critical Study (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1977), p. 219.

[3]These were major, German-led, anti-guerrilla operations carried out in Yugoslavia between the fall of 1941 and May 1944.

[4]Designating these units as 700-level divisions is only a convenient means of identifying them as a group. It does not denote special types of units.

[5]Michael R. Foot, Resistance: An Analysis of European Resistance to Nazism, 1941-1945 (London: Eyre Methuen Ltd., 1976), p. 193.

CHAPTER ONE

The Axis Takeover of Yugoslavia

Few countries in interwar Europe were as internally divided and as vulnerable internationally as was the state of Yugoslavia which had come into existence in 1918. Although Serbs made up 42% of the population in the new Yugoslav state and Croats added another 25%, the remaining 33% of the population belonged to seven other nationalities.[1] Despite the multiplicity of ethnic groups in Yugoslavia, or perhaps because of it, the highly nationalistic Serbs were the ones who dominated the political life of Yugoslavia. This Serbian hegemony of Yugoslavia led to a great deal of bitterness among non-Serbian Yugoslavs, particularly among Croats.

In addition to the divisive influence of many nationalities, the Yugoslav state was also plagued by major religious differences. In 1931 about 48% of the population in Yugoslavia were of the Serbian Orthodox faith (Serbs, Macedonians, Montenegrins, and various minorities), 37% were Roman Catholics (largely Croats and Slovenes), 11% were Moslems (the Slavic Moslems of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the Albanian and Turkish minorities), and less than 4% were Protestants or Jews.[2] Relations between these religious groups were marked by mutual feelings of intolerance and suspicion; feelings which provided the catalyst for explosive, brutal persecutions carried out against each other during the Second World War.

As if these internal divisions were not enough to threaten the political stability of the kingdom, Yugoslavia also stood in a rather exposed international position. Some of her territory was coveted by

her neighbours Italy, Hungary, Bulgaria, and, after Germany's annexation of Austria, by Germany as well. Although Yugoslavia was initially a link in France's interwar security chain, her government had, by the early 1930's, begun to follow a formally neutralist foreign policy. In actuality, however, the Yugoslav government began to cultivate increasingly friendly relations with the Axis powers after 1935.[3] The culmination of closer relations between Germany and Yugoslavia, which came about largely as the result of political pressure exerted by Germany, was the signing by the Yugoslav Premier Dragisha Cvetkovich and Foreign Minister Cincar Markovich of the Tripartite Agreement of March 26, 1941. The overthrow of the Cvetkovich government and regent Prince Paul by a large portion of the Serbian-dominated Yugoslavian Armed Forces officer corps on the following night seems to have reflected the general sentiments of the Yugoslav population. Hitler, who was first incredulous and then indignant when notified of the March 27th coup, declared that he would "destroy the country militarily and as a national unit. No diplomatic inquiries would be made, no ultimatum pressed. Yugoslavia was to be pulverized with merciless brutality... in a lightening operation."[4]

Early on the morning of April 6, 1941, the German campaign against Yugoslavia began with a massive airstrike against Belgrade and airfields and ground installations of the Yugoslav air force by 150 German bombers and Stukas.[5] At the same time the ground attack commenced with the German 2nd Army under General Maximilian von Weichs pushing from Austria and Romania into northwestern Yugoslavia while Tank Group (Panzer Gruppe) 1, commanded by General von Kleist, advanced from the area around Sofia, Bulgaria, into southeastern Yugoslavia.

There could be scarcely any doubt as to who would prevail. The

German forces alone consisted of seven crack infantry divisions, four motorized divisions, four tank divisions, and approximately 800 airplanes.[6] According to Jozo Tomasevich, "Two-fifths of them were armoured or fully motorized divisions with tremendous firepower and maneuverability and were led by veterans of campaigns in Poland, Norway, and France."[7]

The German forces were joined on April 11th by the Hungarian 3rd Army, consisting of five divisions under the command of General Gorody-Novak, which began operations between the Tisza and Danube Rivers. The following day, the Italian 2nd Army, commanded by General Vittorio Ambrosio, crossed the Yugoslav border at Rijeka (Fiume) and advanced southward.

The exact strength of the Yugoslav Army which faced these sizeable Axis forces is difficult to determine. The total theoretical strength of the Yugoslav Army in April 1941, was approximately thirty-five divisions, but only half of these units were mobilized at the time of the German onslaught of April 6th.[8] Besides being numerically inferior to the invading Axis forces, a large part of the Yugoslav Army's armaments and a quarter of their airplanes were obsolete, their strategy and tactics were outmoded, army leadership was poor, and communications were inadequate.[9]

The swiftness with which the German campaign in Yugoslavia proceeded is attested to by the fact that all of the major Yugoslav cities, except Sarajevo, were captured before Germany's Axis partners initiated their military operations -- Nish fell on April 9th, Skoplje on April 10th, Zagreb on April 10th, and Belgrade on April 12th. On April 17th, an armistice was signed by General von Weichs (the commander of the German 2nd Army) and the Italian military attaché in Belgrade on

the one hand and former Yugoslav Foreign Minister Cincar Markovich and Yugoslav General Jankovich on the other. It came into effect on April 18th. The Axis campaign against Yugoslavia had lasted but eleven days.

The collapse of Yugoslavia was not simply due to the decisive qualitative and quantitative superiority of the Axis forces over the Yugoslav army. The consistent alienation of the various ethnic groups in interwar Yugoslavia by Serbian hegemony had resulted, according to Jozo Tomasevich, in "a state ruled by few for the few, in which the non-Serbian nations and broad strata of the population had no stake and for which they would not fight."[10]

The actual losses of Yugoslav military personnel during the Axis invasion are unknown. However, the Germans captured 337,864 Yugoslav troops and NCO's as well as 6,298 officers during the course of the April campaign.[11] The majority of these prisoners, after the release of most of the Croats and Macedonians, were sent to prisoner-of-war camps in Germany.

The civilian population of Belgrade seemed to have suffered far worse than the Yugoslav army. The several bombings carried out by the Luftwaffe on April 6, 1941 are estimated to have resulted in civilian casualties from anywhere in excess of 5,000 people to as many as 20,000.[12] German losses in the campaign were negligible: 151 dead, 392 wounded, and 15 missing.[13]

Immediately after this crushing defeat Yugoslavia was carved up among Hungary, Bulgaria, Italy, Germany, and a newly created state, the so-called "Independent State of Croatia". With the approval of Hitler and Mussolini, Bulgaria annexed most of Macedonia, southeastern Serbia, and a small section of the Kosovo region, while Hungary claimed Bachka,

Baranja, the Croatian area of Medjimurje, and the Slovene region of Prekomurje.

Certainly one of the most important territorial adjustments was the formation of the "Independent State of Croatia". It comprised the territory of Croatia-Slavonia (except for Medjimurje which went to Hungary), a small area north of Rijeka, some minor Adriatic islands, a thin strip of southern Dalmatia, and the entire region of Bosnia and Herzegovina. While this Croatian state was, in theory, a kingdom ruled by the Duke of Spoleto, an Italian prince who never came to Yugoslavia, it was governed by Ante Pavelich, the founder and leader of the Croatian terrorist group, the Ustasha. Pavelich, a Croatian member in the Yugoslav parliament from 1927 to 1929, had formed the Ustasha (meaning "revolutionary") on January 7, 1929, the day after Yugoslavia's King Alexander declared a royal dictatorship. Pavelich's basic philosophy in creating the Ustasha was that no real satisfactory solution to Serb-Croat conflicts was possible, that the Croats should have an independent state, and that in the struggle to build such a state any and all means were allowable.[14]

Pavelich's rise from being the leader of a small, rather ineffective Croatian terrorist group to becoming head of government for the Independent State of Croatia was partly due to the fact that Mussolini, a longtime protector of the Ustasha in Italy, felt that Pavelich would be a pliable subordinate. It was also due to the reason that no respectable Croatian of any popularity was willing or available to assume the leadership of the newly created Croatian state. Hitler and Mussolini therefore decided to place Pavelich in the position of head of state, and on April 11, 1941 he left Rome with 300 followers to assume power in

Croatia.[15]

Despite what appearances may have suggested, the ultimate power in Croatia rested not in the hands of Pavelich but rather in the German and Italian military forces which had occupied the area during the course of the April campaign. Virtual zones of occupation were set up by German and Italian troops, and a temporary demarcation line between the areas controlled by their respective forces was established by the middle of April. The demarcation line was redrawn and made permanent by Hitler on April 24, 1941. German forces controlled the area to the east of the demarcation line and Italian forces the area to the west of the line.

Aside from their zone in Croatia, Italian occupation areas in Yugoslavia also included part of Slovenia (the greater part was occupied by German forces), Montenegro, most of the Adriatic islands, and, in the name of Albania, a larger part of the Kosovo region and a small strip of Montenegro near Lake Scutari.

German military presence in Yugoslavia, and in the Balkans in general, marked a definite change in German attitude toward the area. In the late 1930's German statesmen had expressed some economic interest in Yugoslavia but professed to have no political interest in the area and were content to see it as an Italian interest area.[16] However, much to the dissatisfaction of the Italians, this attitude had changed during the course of 1940 and 1941. The primary reason for this turnabout in attitude were strategic considerations toward future expansion in southern Europe and the Soviet Union.[17] The German High Command considered the Balkans to be a bulwark against attacks upon its southern flanks and believed its possession of the Balkans was critical for the security of the forces in the southern region of the Soviet Union.[18] Also, important

road and rail lines linked Yugoslavia to Greece, from where supplies were sent to Axis troops in North Africa. Aside from these strategic considerations, another important factor for German interest in Yugoslavia specifically was its source of strategic raw materials. Yugoslavia's Bor copper mine, the most productive copper mine in the world during the interwar period, supplied 21% of Germany's wartime requirement of copper, while 100% of Germany's wartime requirements of chromium and 10% of its bauxite requirements were also taken from Yugoslavia.[19]

German-occupied areas in Yugoslavia, aside from the German sphere of interest in Croatia, included the greater part of Slovenia, the Banat, and Serbia, essentially within its pre-1912 boundary. The area of Northern Slovenia, originally intended to be annexed to the German Reich, remained outside the Reich throughout the war. Despite Hitler's call for the total Germanization (Eindeutschung) of the area, only limited attempts were made to deport the Slovenes, who made up 96.4% of the population in German-occupied Slovenia.[20]

The region of the Banat, although occupied by German forces, had an uncertain future during the first few months of occupation. The Banat was a very fertile region and also contained a fairly sizeable German nationalist minority which, depending on different estimates, made up anywhere from 18.7% to 25% of the total population of 600,000 to 640,000 people in the Banat.[21] This German minority feared that if Hitler satisfied Hungarian aspirations and handed over the occupation of the Banat to Hungary the large Hungarian landowners in the Banat would assume the major share of power in the area. At the same time Germany was concerned that a Hungarian occupation of the Banat would aggravate longstanding Hungarian-Rumanian quarrels over the region, while the Serbs

who worked for the Germans in the Banat feared that Hungarian occupation of the area would be tantamount to annexation.[22] In the end German considerations of a plentiful food supply and the German minority won out. The Banat remained under a system of German military government but was administered by local German nationals.

The German occupation of most of Serbia, an area containing a total population of between 3.5 to 4 million people, represented a unique situation in Yugoslavia. It was the only area in Yugoslavia directly administered by German military authorities.[23] The major reason for the establishment of a German military administration here was that Serbia, from a German point of view, remained the representative of the former Yugoslav state. For this reason, according to Jovan Marjanovich,

> Serbia was to bear almost all the consequences of the 'punishment of culprits' for March 27th, for the April War, for interfering with German plans in connection with the war in the Balkans, for unforeseen German material expenses and casualties.[24]

This attitude is further witnessed in notes made by Italian Foreign Minister Ciano of a discussion with German Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop in Vienna on April 21, 1941. Ciano wrote, "It is the German Government's intention to reduce Serbia to the lowest possible terms so as to prevent its again becoming an active and dangerous center of conspiracy and intrigues."[25]

It is evident, however, that German military administration was also established in Serbia to maintain peaceful conditions for the systematic mining of the previously mentioned vital non-ferrous materials and to keep open transportation lines. The Danube River, running from Central Europe through Belgrade and into Southeastern Europe, was a particularly important route carrying Rumanian oil and wheat to Germany

and Central Europe.[26]

German military government was introduced in Serbia on April 22, 1941 and was divided into three major sections: a command section responsible for ensuring safety and order in Serbia by military means, a military administration whose duty it was to maintain general security and to develop political and economic policy, and a local administration directed by a quisling Serbian government.[27]

The command section of the German military government in Serbia was headed by the Armed Forces Commander in Serbia (Wehrmachtbefehlshaber Serbien), a position to which Hitler appointed Air Force General Helmuth Foerster on April 18, 1941. Foerster was replaced by another Luftwaffe General, Ludwig von Schroeder, on June 9, 1941, at which time the title of Armed Forces Commander in Serbia was changed to Commander in Serbia (Befehlshaber Serbien).[28] Several more generals were to fill the position before the end of 1941.[29]

The administrative section of the German military government in Serbia was under the jurisdiction of SS Gruppenfuehrer Harald Turner who had previously been head of the German military administration in Paris. The authority of the administrative section to supervise both German and Serbian governing bodies appears to have eventually hampered the efficiency of the command section. Thus, at the end of 1942 Turner was dismissed and the administrative section of the military government in Serbia was subordinated to the command section.[30]

With the hope of decreasing the number of German troops necessary for garrison duty in Serbia, the German military authorities created a provisional Serbian puppet government in May, 1941. It was headed by Milan Acimovich, a former Yugoslav minister of the interior and ex-chief of police in Belgrade. This provisional government was known as the

"Commissariat". The Commissariat had little or no real power and clearly failed to capture the loyalty of more than a minority of Serbs. It lasted only four months, when the German military authorities officially replaced it with a new Serbian quisling government under General Milan Nedich, who had been Yugoslav Minister of War until the March 27th coup. Nedich called his government the "Government of National Salvation". Empowered to rule by decree under close German supervision, the Nedich government was to last until the German collapse in Serbia during October 1944.[31]

The Acimovich government had been given permission to organize a Serbian gendarmerie in May and had even, by the beginning of June, been allowed to arm them.[32] However, in late August the Commander in Serbia, apparently without the knowledge of his superiors, gave the Nedich government a major concession by allowing them to organize their own military units.[33] This was overlooked by the German High Command, largely because growing insurrection made it imperative that Serbian military units be used to restore public order. Yet while the Germans made use of these Serbian military units, they never really trusted the Nedich government. As a result the Serbian forces under Nedich were never larger than about 20,000 men while the Croatian quisling forces numbered, at their greatest strength, approximately 250,000 men.[34]

Despite their propping up of the Nedich government, the German military authorities remained the real rulers of Serbia. They had a final veto in all political, administrative, and economic matters, applied German and martial law over fourteen districts, installed a regular central and local military government, and brought in the Gestapo.[35] The effectiveness of German military administration, together with the unsuitability of Serbia's relatively flat terrain for guerrilla

warfare, seems to account in large part for Serbia, unlike the remainder of Yugoslavia, being relatively free of resistance activity for the duration of the war.

The same degree of German military control was not possible in the Independent State of Croatia since the Germans had acknowledged that it was a sovereign state. Gradually, however, the German military and political representatives in Croatia did acquire a large measure of control over the Pavelich government. The German military representative, General Edmund von Glaise-Horstenau, was a former imperial Austrian staff officer, a well-known military historian, and an excellent intelligence officer. A convert to Nazism in the early 1930's, Glaise had been a member of Chancellor Schuschnigg's cabinet after 1936 and a vicechancellor and minister of the interior in Arthur Seyss-Inquart's cabinet. On April 14, 1941, Glaise was appointed by Hitler to the position of "German General in Zagreb" and was directly responsible to the Chief of the German Armed Forces High Command, Field Marshal Keitel.[36] While being charged with the broad task of protecting German military interests in Croatia, Glaise was, more specifically, responsible for building the Croatian army up to a level where it could maintain order with Italian or German aid, to present German military requirements to the Pavelich government, and to guarantee cooperation between German and Croatian military forces whenever necessary.[37]

A firm Italophobe, Glaise became only more entrenched in this regard as he witnessed the inept performance of the demoralized and war-weary Italian troops in Croatia. With time Glaise also became an often outspoken critic of the corrupt excesses initiated by the morally bankrupt Pavelich regime. He was, however, frustrated in his desire for changes since he had not received the authority to intervene in Croatian

domestic affairs and he also lacked enough manpower to be able to take action on his own.[38] Glaise did not even have unified command over all the German units in Croatia until December 1942.[39]

Glaise's German counterpart for political and economic affairs was Siegfried Kasche, who assumed the title of German Envoy in Zagreb. Appointed like Glaise in mid-April 1941, Kasche was a former Free Corps member who had fought in the Baltic after the First World War and had been an early member of the Nazi party. From 1928 to 1932 he had also served as acting Gauleiter in the Ostmark. Kasche had generally been considered a poor choice for an envoy position as he lacked any diplomatic experience and had no idea about Croatian or Yugoslav problems. Scorning traditional means of diplomacy, Kasche dispatched his responsibilities in terms of his own understanding of Nazi party policy, the essence of which was, according to Norman Rich, "to build up the Pavelich regime and support that regime against the representatives of the German Army and against the Italians."[40] In fact, as Glaise was becoming an increasingly harsh critic of the Pavelich regime, Kasche grew to be its most ardent German supporter.

The German military campaign in Greece, which had followed upon the conclusion of the Axis victory in Yugoslavia, had resulted, by the middle of May, 1941, in the establishment of three German military administrations in the Balkans -- one in Serbia and two in Greece. In order to create a more unified command over these areas Hitler, on June 9, 1941, appointed Field Marshal Wilhelm List, the commander of the German 12th Army, to the position of Armed Forces Commander for the Southeast (Wehrmachtbefehlshaber Südost).[41] List was directly subordinated to Hitler and held supreme authority over all German forces in the Balkans, except for parts of the Luftwaffe deployed for offensive air

warfare and the German military forces in Croatia.[42] In addition, the Armed Forces Commander for the Southeast, whose headquarters was in Salonika, was responsible for the preparation and direction of a coordinated defense against attack, the suppression of internal unrest, the conduct of relations and collaboration with the Italian and Bulgarian military forces in the Balkans, and the security of German supply routes through the Balkans.[43]

The German forces which had carried out the attack on Yugoslavia had to be quickly removed in preparation for "Operation Barbarossa", Germany's planned attack on the Soviet Union. However, even as late as May 30, 1941, there were still eight German reserve divisions left in Yugoslavia which were earmarked for "Operation Barbarossa".[44] Not until early June were these eight divisions freed for deployment in the east by four other divisions -- the 704th, 714th, 717th, and 718th Infantry Divisions.

These four 700-level German divisions had only been formed in the period of mid-April to early May, 1941. Because they had been created to serve expressly as garrison troops they had certain deficiencies which greatly restricted their usefulness in later anti-guerrilla operations. Due to the urgent necessity of replacing those German troops in Yugoslavia which were needed for "Operation Barbarossa", the training of these four 700-level divisions was curtailed to the extent that one division only completed battalion exercises.[45] Aside from insufficient training, the quality and quantity of manpower in these divisions was below normal standards. Most of the personnel in these divisions were men born between 1907 and 1913. The platoon leaders and non-commissioned officers were, in particular, overage for infantry service, and the

combat experience of most of the company and higher commanders was limited to that acquired in the First World War.[46]

In terms of quantity these 700-level divisions, which were part of the fifteenth in a series of draft callups, or 15th Wave (Welle) had failed to receive their full complement of manpower. While all of the previous waves had provided each German division with three infantry regiments, the four 700-level divisions had received only two.[47] It is not known just how many men short these divisions were at the time of their deployment in Yugoslavia. However, figures given in a report by the Commander in Serbia to the Armed Forces Commander Southeast on October 21, 1942, reveal that despite having received more personnel during the course of 1941 and 1942, the German 700-level divisions in Yugoslavia were still well below accepted divisional strength.[48] In this report the ration strength of each of the divisions was given as follows: for the 704th Division, 9,765 men (including two regiments of the Russian "Guard Corps"); the 714th Division, 8,947 men (including two ethnic German battalions); the 717th Division, 7,221 men (including one regiment of the Russian "Guard Corps"); and the 718th Division with 7,505 men (including two ethnic German battalions).[49] The report also gave the battle strength of each division. Although these figures are again lower than normal, it is interesting to note that the total number of men available for battle made up a rather large part of the rations strength of each division. The 704th Division had a battle strength of 4,613 men, the 714th of 5,703; the 717th Division of 3,754 men; and the 718th Division of 5,153 men.[50]

Aside from the weaknesses imposed by the lack of both sufficient members and battleworthiness, these 700-level divisions were also hampered by shortages of motor vehicles, logistical reserves, and good

quality armament.[51] Some improvements were eventually made. For example, German artillery units made use of heavy arms captured from the Yugoslavs.[52] However, despite these halfway attempts at building up these 700-level divisions, they had neither the personnel nor the endurance to carry out anti-guerrilla operations of long duration.

The four 700-level divisions, upon their arrival in Yugoslavia, were attached to the LXVth Corps Command under the authority of General Paul Bader, who was later to be appointed Commander in Serbia. The 704th, 714th, and 717th divisions were stationed in Serbia throughout 1941, while the 718th Division was placed in the German interest zone in Croatia.[53] The headquarters of the LXVth Corps Command was in Belgrade, while the divisions established garrisons in Valjevo, Uzice, Visegrad, Cacak, and in the areas of Topola-Mladenovac-Pozarevac and Kosovska Mitrovica-Raska-Novi Pazar.[54] The 718th Infantry Division's initial headquarters was in Banja Luka, and while it was the only German division in Croatia until early 1942, it did receive help through the Croatian Home Guard's security duty on the Zagreb-Belgrade and Brod-Sarajevo railway lines.[55]

In Serbia the three 700-level German divisions were aided in the maintenance of public order by five different military organizations, one of which was White Russian and four of which were Serbian. The Russian "Guard Corps" was created in the fall of 1941. It initially comprised three regiments, with a total strength of about 4,000 men.[56] Made up largely of anti-Communist Russian emigres to Yugoslavia who had formerly served in the Imperial Russian Army, the Russian Guard Corps was incorporated directly into the German armed forces. A large part of the personnel in the Russian Guard Corps was unfit for long periods of field service, and on the few occasions when they were employed in anti-guerrilla operations they tended to perform quite poorly.[57] As a

result they were chiefly employed to carry out security duties on vital railway and communication lines. Like the 1st Cossack Division, a force of anti-Communists recruited in the Soviet Union after the German invasion, (which was transferred to Yugoslavia in late September 1943), the Russian Guard Corps retained their hatred of Communism and, therefore, remained loyal to the Germans until the end of the war.

The four different Serbian military organizations that worked with the German occupiers in Serbia were the Serbian Border Guard, the Serbian State Guard, the Serbian Volunteer Battalions (later Corps), and the so-called "legalized" Chetniks.[58] The smallest and, for the purposes of this study, the most insignificant of the Serbian quisling military units was the Serbian Border Guard. Its primary purpose was to control traffic moving across the Serbian frontier.

At its inception the Serbian Border Guard numbered some 5,600 men, which included a German cadre of 600 men.[59] The Serbian Border Guard does not appear to have participated in any German anti-guerrilla operations of any sort in Serbia and seems to have become increasingly mistrusted by the German authorities in Serbia as time went on. As the Commander in Serbia put it on June 3, 1943, "An increasing unreliability is appearing in the organs of the Serbian Border Guard."[60] It appears that it was also subject to desertions.

The Serbian State Guard was an enlarged gendarmerie which guarded Serbian frontiers, towns, and rural areas but was also prepared, if necessary, to support both urban and rural police formations.[61] While the Serbian State Guard was theoretically under the control of Minister President Nedich, its tactical deployment was, in practice, in the hands of the Commander in Serbia. Upon its formation in the summer of 1941 the

Serbian State Guard comprised a force of five battalions with an authorized strength of 3,560 men and, at its height, probably numbered fewer than 20,000 officers and men.[62]

The Serbian State Guard was never a strong fighting force and gradually disintegrated through battleweariness and desertions. While Higher SS and Police Leader in Serbia August Meyszner indicated in various reports during 1943 that the Serbian State Guard was both "useful and energetic" in fighting against Communists, he also noted that it "intervenes reluctantly against the DM (Draza Mihailovich) members."[63] By May 1943 a report from the 104th Jaeger Division (a new designation for the former 704th Infantry Division) also referred to the Serbian State Guard as "unreliable in fighting the Draza Mihailovich members."[64]

From January, 1943, the Serbian State Guard began to desert. The Commander in Serbia stated in a situation report for the period of January 19th to 29th, 1943,

> It has been discovered that during the recent period the disarming of over 100 Serbian State Guard, whether individually or in small groups, has occurred mainly in eastern Serbia and in southwestern Serbia. The disarmed men, in many cases, have deserted to the D.M. (Draza Mihailovich) group.[65]

By the fall of 1943 desertion in the ranks of the Serbian State Guard appears to have become an almost constant occurrence. However, despite its increased unreliability its manpower was crucial to the Germans, particularly after the Italian capitulation in September, 1943.

The Serbian "Volunteer Battalions", reorganized as the Serbian Volunteer Corps in November, 1942, was the party army of the Serbian fascist Dimitri Ljotich. The party, known as the "Zbor" (Rally) movement, was imbued with a strong Serbian nationalist and corporatist

outlook which leaned toward totalitarianism while being heavily based on religion at the same time.[66] In August, 1941, Zbor was given the right to form its own special armed volunteer units to fight insurgency in Serbia. Numbering first four and then five battalions of an initial strength of anywhere between 2,000 to 3,600 men, the Serbian Volunteer Battalions were both fully supplied and maintained by the German occupation forces and were also under their direct command.[67] At their greatest extent the Serbian Volunteer Battalions do not appear to have numbered more than approximately 9,000-10,000 men.[68]

Despite their small size the Serbian Volunteer Battalions were the only Serbian military group fighting for the Germans which the Germans both trusted and considered worthy of praise, and were the only Serbian military group which were reported by the Germans to be generally feared by the Serbian population.[69] In 1943, at a time when the Serbian State Guard was being cited in German reports for increasing unreliability and desertion, a report by the 104th Division stated, "At this time the Serbian Volunteer Corps is fit not only for employment against communists but also against D.M. (Draza Mihailovich) members."[70] In addition the rate of desertions from the Serbian Volunteer Corps was considerably lower than from the Serbian State Guard.[71] The Serbian Volunteer Corps was to prove to be a stoically loyal German ally until the final collapse of the German army in Yugoslavia in May, 1945.

The last of the Serbian quisling forces working with the Germans in Serbia were the so-called "legalized" Chetniks. After the occupation of Yugoslavia by the Axis, Kosta Pecanac, the president of the Chetnik Association for Freedom and Honor, had, with a small force, been left relatively intact in the Toplica River valley in southern Serbia.

Uncertain as to whether he should continue to resist the German occupier or not, Pecanac decided to back the Germans after the emergence of the communist-led Partisans, since the Chetnik Association was vehemently anti-Communist. An agreement was reached in the late summer of 1941 between Pecanac and the German military authorities in Serbia which provided for the deployment of Pecanac's Chetnik detachments against the rising tide of insurgency. By the fall of 1941 these now "legalized" Chetniks had a strength of approximately 3,000 men and by December, 1941 they numbered some 6,000 men in 36 detachments.[72] At their greatest extent these legalized Chetniks numbered around 13,500 men in 78 detachments.[73]

On April 10, 1942, by order of the Commander in Serbia, General Paul Bader, these legalized Chetniks were placed under the command of the German garrison divisions in their particular area of occupation. Under closer scrutiny by German forces these legalized Chetnik formations soon proved to be of little fighting value and also showed themselves to be untrustworthy. By December, 1942, German troops and SD men had disbanded 28 of these legalized Chetnik detachments because of their unreliability, and out of the 50 remaining detachments 8 were judged by General Bader as clearly unreliable, 36 were defined as limited in terms of reliability, and only 6 detachments were viewed as being trustworthy.[74] Under such circumstances the Commander in Serbia had no choice but to order the demobilization of all legalized Chetnik detachments by the end of 1942, and by March, 1943 they were all completely disbanded.[75] Many ordinary members of these demobilized units fled into the forests and joined Mihailovich's Chetniks while many of the officers were arrested and sent to German prisoner of war camps.[76]

Within the German interest area of Croatia the 718th Infantry

Division, the lone German unit in Croatia until early 1942, received military assistance from two distinctly Croatian military sources -- the Ustasha and the Croatian Home Army, or Domobrans. Each of these units, for quite different reasons, upset German plans to maintain order within the Independent State of Croatia. Soon after his arrival in Croatia, Ustasha leader Ante Pavelich had formed a party army of fifteen battalions, a personal body guard of one infantry regiment (later a division), and one cavalry division. By the end of 1941 the Ustasha strength was approximately 10,000 men.[77] Few eyewitnesses to the events in wartime Yugoslavia have ever questioned the battleworthiness of the Ustasha. Major Adolph von Ernsthausen, the German commander of the First Battalion of the 392nd Croatian Artillery Regiment described the Ustasha as generally, "reliable, hardy and brave troops."[78] Wilhelm Hoettl, a former German intelligence officer in Yugoslavia, states, "The Ustasha troops undoubtedly showed superlative courage. They fought to the last round, and between them and the partisans quarter was neither asked nor given."[79]

The major disadvantage the German military authorities in Yugoslavia found in deploying the Ustasha against insurgents was best summed up by General Glaise who wrote, "At times they are more destructive than they are useful."[80] This destructive nature of the Ustasha had revealed itself from the moment Pavelich assumed power. He was convinced that there was no place for Serbs in the Independent State of Croatia despite the fact that here the Serbs numbered 2.2 million people in a total population of roughly 6.5 million inhabitants.[81] In the summer of 1941, Pavelich inaugurated a horrible campaign of persecution directed against the Serbs in Croatia. Three grim choices lay before these Serbs: conversion to Roman Catholicism, flight into

Serbia, or extermination. In merciless waves of brutality and destruction the Ustasha zealously forced the conversion of between 200,000 to 300,000 Orthodox Serbs to Roman Catholicism and murdered anywhere between 200,000 and 600,000 Serbs, Jews, Gypsies, and anti-Ustasha Croats in Croatian villages or specially constructed concentration camps.[82] Aside from those converted or killed by the Ustasha, there were thousands of chiefly Serbian refugees who, horrified by the brutal actions of the Ustasha, fled into Serbia or, more often than not, joined Chetnik or Partisan forces in the forests of Croatia. Ustasha excesses were the frequent cause of complaints by the German military authorities and in one case, during June, 1942 an Ustasha company's atrocities against the civilian population in East Bosnia were so excessive that German field police actually had to disarm the members of the company and place them under arrest.[83]

Far less destructive than the Ustasha, but also of greatly inferior battleworth, was the Croatian Home Guard, or Domobrans. They were initially under the command of Slavko Kvaternik, a former colonel in the Austro-Hungarian army and a leader of the Ustasha.[84] Charged with building the Croatian Army from the ground up, Kvaternik had created, by the fall of 1941, five to six Home Guard divisions chiefly composed of older reservists in the former Yugoslav army, of whom only a minority were well-trained.[85] Aside from being overaged and badly trained for the most part, the Home Guard troops were dispirited by the sudden defeat of the Yugoslav army by the Axis forces and a majority of their officers had little sympathy for the Axis cause.[86] The combined result of all these factors was, of course, that the Croatian Home Guard were very ineffective troops. Armed Forces Commander for the Southeast

General Walter Kuntze stated in March, 1942, "... the fighting quality of the Croatian troops is limited. These troops do not exceed the value of a militia. The battalions have strengths of 1-2 companies, the artillery is weak."[87]

By late 1943, the eight brigades of the Croatian Home Army had deteriorated even further. General Lothar Rendulic, who as commander of the German 2nd Tank Army had been assigned by Hitler to halt insurgency in Yugoslavia, said of the Croatian Home Guard in late 1943, "Their battleworth was only slight since it reflected the morale of the people... They also feared reprisals against their families. There were, therefore, many deserters."[88]

Aside from these two exclusively Croatian military groups, there was another partially Croatian military organization operating in the Independent State of Croatia -- the Croatian "Legion" Divisions of the Wehrmacht. Known as the 369th, 373rd, and 392nd Infantry Divisions, these units were commanded by German officers and aided by German specialists. While originally trained and outfitted in Russia for duty in the Soviet Union, these divisions, due to increasing unrest in Yugoslavia, were eventually sent to Croatia.[89] The first of these units, the 369th Croatian Infantry Division, or "Devils Division" (Teufels-division), was formed in the latter part of 1942 in Dollersheim, Austria, and from September 9, 1942 was under the command of Colonel (later Major General) Fritz Neidholdt.[90] The division appears to have received an abundant allotment of personnel, as its initial strength stood at a total of 12,000 men.[91] Not until January, 1943 was it ready for deployment in Yugoslavia, and once there it was chiefly involved in security duty and in minor anti-guerrilla operations.

The 373rd Croatian Infantry Division, also known as the "Tiger Division", was formed in Dollersheim at the end of January, 1943, and was under the command of Major General (later Lieutenant General) Emil Zellner. It was deployed in Bosnia at the end of April, 1943. The 392nd Croatian Infantry Division, or "Blue Division", was formed in September, 1943, and was under the command of a former Austro-Hungarian infantry officer, Lieutenant General Hans Mickl. All three of these divisions seem to have been confined largely to railway security duty and minor anti-guerrilla operations.

Although many German military commanders assumed that Croatian soldiers would fight with greater vigor if they were under the command of German officers, the Croatian Legion divisions do not appear to support such assumptions.[92] One German report listed 27 cases of desertion from the 369th Croatian Infantry Division during a twenty-six day period in August, 1943, while the 373rd Croatian Division reported 175 deserters in a period of less than three weeks during this same month.[93] It would therefore seem that despite being led by German commanders, the Croats in these Croatian Legion units were often as unsympathetic to the Axis forces as were their counterparts in the Croatian Home Guard.

While the Croatian and Serbian units supporting the German Army tended to be kept within their respective areas of Croatia and Serbia in order to avoid further exacerbating the tensions between these two ethnic groups, there were two SS divisions which operated longer than any other SS units in both Croatia and Serbia. The first of these was the 7th SS Prinz Eugen Division which was formed on March 1, 1942. From its inception the division was under the command of SS Brigadeführer

und General-major der Waffen SS Artur Phleps (promoted on April 20, 1942 to Gruppenführer und Generalleutnant der Waffen SS).[94] The division was led largely by officers and non-commissioned officers from the Reich while the greater part of the enlisted men were ethnic Germans from Yugoslavia, Rumania, and Hungary.[95] Created especially for anti-guerrilla warfare, the Prinz Eugen Division fought in Yugoslavia from September 1942, until May 1945. Although the initial size of the 7th SS Prinz Eugen Division is unknown, it appears from a strength report given by the Commander in Serbia on October 21, 1943, that it was comparable with that of most of the SS divisions during the same period. The ration strength of the division at that time was given as 21,851 men, which included three regiments of the Russian Guard Corps.[96]

The 7th SS Prinz Eugen Division participated in several of the major Axis anti-guerrilla operations and was used in smaller scale anti-guerrilla operations as well. The division soon acquired a reputation for being a harsh and ruthless adversary, characteristics which, according to Jozo Tomasevich, were apparently common to units made up of ethnic Germans.[97]

The other SS division which served a comparatively long period in Yugoslavia was the 13th SS Handschar Division. Like the Prinz Eugen Division, it had German officers and non-commissioned officers but it differed from the Prince Eugen in that its enlisted men were Slavic Moslems from Bosnia and Herzegovina. On February 10, 1943, Hitler had ordered the creation of a Moslem division to be filled by recruits from the Independent State of Croatia. This unit, like the Prinz Eugen Division, was trained specifically for anti-guerrilla warfare against Yugoslav insurgents. However, not until July 1943, did the 13th SS

Division have enough men to be formally created and for training to commence under the leadership of SS Standartenführer Herbert von Obwurzer.[98] As a result it was not deployed in Yugoslavia until February 1944.

Aside from the German, Croatian, and Serbian military forces, brief mention should be made of the other Axis military units in Yugoslavia -- the Italian, Bulgarian, and Hungarian occupation forces.

The Italian interest area of Croatia was occupied by the 2nd Italian Army, while the 9th Italian Army was on garrison duty in Montenegro. Between these two armies there were, in total, 16 Italian divisions in Yugoslavia by the fall of 1941.[99] The Plenipotentiary German General in Croatia, General Glaise, estimated in February 1942 that the number of Italian divisions deployed in Croatia was somewhere between 10 to 12 divisions, with over 130 battalions.[100]

Though they had a large number of divisions in Yugoslavia (the exact figures as to the strengths of these Italian divisions is uncertain), the Italians proved to be a largely ineffective fighting force. Hampered from the very beginning of their occupation in Yugoslavia by the lack of motor vehicles and by having all spare Italian personnel sent to the Eastern Front or North Africa, the already demoralized Italian troops sank even further into apathy. The morale of the Italian troops was terrible according to the diary entry of Italian Foreign Minister Count Ciano dated January 6, 1942, "Our public relations officer in the Second Army in Croatia sends bad news of the situation and about the morale of the troops. Some units permitted themselves to be captured without firing a shot."[101]

The Italians did carry out anti-guerrilla operations both with

the Germans and on their own. However, as will soon be shown, the Italian forces showed such a lack of fighting spirit that in several of the major Axis anti-guerrilla operations it was the Italian forces, more often than not, that were responsible for the failure of these operations.

Within the Bulgarian occupation zone there were stationed in the fall of 1941 two infantry divisions of the 5th Bulgarian Army, elements of the 1st Mobile Division, the 6th Bulgarian Division, two border and cavalry brigades, one defence regiment, and a series of gendarmerie, police, and other units.[102] However, the Bulgarian occupation zone was expanded from its previously mentioned limits by the German authorities in Serbia in late 1941, early 1942. This adjustment was made due to the inability of the undersized German divisions to maintain order and keep the transportation routes and communication lines open in Serbia.[103] Into this expanded occupation area was transferred the First Bulgarian Occupation Corps which had formerly been stationed in Thrace. Two further stages in the expansion of the Bulgarian occupation zone were carried out by the Germans from early 1942 until July, 1943, when only a small part of northwest Serbia was left under purely German occupation.[104] However, the Bulgarian troops in this expanded occupation zone were under German supervision and gradually came under the operational control of the Commander in Serbia.[105]

The strengths of the Bulgarian divisions in Yugoslavia are also uncertain. The only estimate available was for the First Bulgarian Occupation Corps. While the strength of the Corps upon its entry into Yugoslavia in early 1942 is unknown, its total strength, as recorded in a report by the Commander in Serbia in October 1942, was 18,682 men.[106]

Having this size of an army corps it is reasonable to assume that the Bulgarian divisions were about the same strength as the undersized German 700-level divisions in Yugoslavia.

The behavior of Bulgarian troops within their occupation areas in Yugoslavia seems to be a subject of some dispute among scholars. While Robert Wolff contends that the Bulgarians were better behaved than any of the other occupation powers, a U.S. Army pamphlet, in describing Bulgarian anti-guerrilla operations in Serbia during the late fall of 1941 states, "In general these were so savage as to quell the growth of any resistance movement of significance until late the following year."[107]

The morale of the Bulgarian occupation forces in Yugoslavia began to deteriorate in late 1943, and desertion from Bulgarian units in Yugoslavia became more frequent from November, 1943, onward. Several bands made up of Bulgarian army deserters and inspired by communist propaganda began to fight against both German and Bulgarian units in Yugoslavia and Bulgaria.

The Hungarian military units were the least active of the Axis or quisling forces in Yugoslavia. Most of the areas of Yugoslavia which were occupied by Hungarian forces had been part of the Austro-Hungarian empire until 1918 and contained large Hungarian minorities.[108] As a result, the Hungarian attitude toward the population in its occupation areas was far more lenient than of the other Axis occupiers in Yugoslavia.[109] In the period from September to November, 1941, the following Hungarian troops were deployed in Yugoslavia: parts of two infantry divisions and one armoured division, one cavalry brigade, one infantry regiment, elements of two infantry regiments, auxiliary, border

and police units.[110] However, in the period from September, 1943 to April, 1944, there was a reduction in the number of Hungarian forces in Yugoslavia as two Hungarian infantry divisions (the 14th and 15th Hungarian Divisions), parts of the 1st Cavalry Division, border, police, and auxiliary units remained.[111] Hungarian military units in Yugoslavia, for reasons still unclear, were excluded by the Germans from playing any role whatsoever in the suppression of insurrection in Yugoslavia and because the Hungarian occupation area remained relatively peaceful throughout the war, there were fewer occupation units required to maintain order.

The striking similarity among most, if not all, of the Axis occupation forces and their quisling supporters in Yugoslavia was their failure before June 1941 to make any real contingency plans for the possibility of facing rebel guerrilla fighters. This oversight is difficult to understand in light of the long tradition of guerrilla warfare which had prevailed among many of the ethnic groups in Yugoslavia prior to the formation of the Yugoslavian state. It seems most likely that the Axis believed their decisive defeat of the Yugoslav army was a blow from which the country would not recover and, for this reason, garrison duty would be their sole concern. This initial failure by the Axis to consider the possibility of having to deal with guerrilla warfare in Yugoslavia meant that the quelling of insurrection was to be a largely uphill battle from the very beginning.

NOTES FOR CHAPTER ONE

[1]Jozo Tomasevich, The Chetniks: War and Revolution in Yugoslavia 1941-1945 (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1975), p. 7.

[2]Ibid., p. 7-8.

[3]Ibid., p. 11.

[4]Hugh R. Trevor-Roper, Hitler's War Directives (London: Pan Books Ltd., 1964), p. 107.

[5]Kurt von Tippelskirch, "Der deutsche Balkanfeldzug 1941", Wehrwissenshaftliche Rundschau, Volume 5 (Darmstadt: Verlag E.S. Mittler & Sohn, January, 1955), p. 60.

[6]Kriegstagebuch des Oberkommandos der Wehrmacht I, January, 1940-December, 1941, ed. Hans-Adolph Jacobsen (Frankfurt on Main: Bernard & Graefe, Verlag für Wehrwesen, 1963), p. 1200.

[7]Tomasevich, The Chetniks, p. 65.

[8]Jozo Tomasevich, "Yugoslavia during the Second World War", Contemporary Yugoslavia: Twenty Years of Socialist Experiment, ed. Wayne S. Vucinich (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1969), p. 70.

[9]Ibid. p. 70 and 72; Robert Lee Wolff, The Balkans in Our Time (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1967), p. 201.

[10]Tomasevich, "Yugoslavia during WW II", p. 74.

[11]Vladimir Dedijer et al., History of Yugoslavia, trans. Kordija Kveder (New York, Toronto, etc.; McGraw Hill Publishers Ltd., 1974), p. 571.

[12]Tomasevich, "Yugoslavia during WW II", p. 73; Ilija Jukich, The Fall of Yugoslavia, trans. Dorian Cooke (New York and London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich Inc., 1974), p. 73. Tomasevich estimates over 5,000 casualties while Jukich puts the number of casualties as being as high as 20,000 people.

[13]von Tippelskirch, p. 61.

[14]Tomasevich, "Yugoslavia during WW II", p. 365. Immediately after the formation of the Ustasha, Pavelich left on a self-imposed exile to Italy and Austria. Aside from organizing the assassination of Yugoslavia's King Alexander in Marsaille on October 9, 1934, Pavelich and the Ustasha remained, until their sudden rise to power in Croatia, a relatively insignificant and ineffective terrorist group.

[15]Norman Rich, Hitler's War Aims: The Establishment of the New Order, Volume II (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., Inc., 1974), p. 274.

[16]Tomasevich, The Chetniks, p. 91.

[17]Ibid.

[18]U.S. Department of the Army Historical Study, German Anti-Guerrilla Operations in the Balkans (1941-1944), p. 11.

[19]Dedijer et al. History of Yugoslavia, p. 576; U.S. Dept. of the Army, p. 13.

[20]Paul N. Hehn, "Serbia, Croatia and Germany, 1941-1945: Civil War and Revolution in the Balkans", Canadian Slavonic Papers Volume XIII, No. 4 (Ottawa, Ontario: Canadian Association of Slavists, Winter, 1971), p. 352; Tomasevich, The Chetniks, p. 91.

[21]Wolff, The Balkans in Our Time, p. 204, Tomasevich, The Chetniks, p. 92.

[22]Jovan Marjanovich, "Information on the People's Liberation War in Yugoslavia", Les Systèmes D'occupation En Yugoslavie 1941-1945: Rapports au 3e Congrès International sur l'Histoire de la Résistance européene à Karlovy Vary, les 2-4 Septembre, 1963, ed. Petar Brajovich et al. (Belgrade: Tisak Grafichkog Zavoda Hrvatske, 1963), p. 269.

[23]Ibid., p. 273, 265.

[24]Ibid., p. 265.

[25]Ciano's Diplomatic Papers, ed. Malcolm Muggeridge, trans. Stuart Hood (London: Odhams Press Ltd., 1948), p. 437.

[26]Frederick Deakin, The Brutal Friendship: Mussolini, Hitler and the Fall of Italian Fascism (New York and Evanston: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1962), p. 124.

[27]Phyllis Auty, Tito: A Biography (Baltimore, Maryland, etc.: Penguin Books Ltd., 1974), p. 218, Marjanovich, "Information on People's Liberation War", p. 278.

[28]Rich, p. 283. In March, 1942 the title was changed again, this time to Commanding General and Territorial Commander in Serbia (Kommandierenden General und Befehlshaber in Serbien), Burkhart Mueller Hillebrand, Das Heer 1933-1945: Der Zweifrontenkrieg, Band III (Frankfurt on Main, Verlag E.S. Mittler & Sohn, 1969), p. 119.

[29]General Schroeder died from injuries sustained in an air crash about a month after his appointment and was succeeded as Commander in Serbia by Air Force General Heinrich Danckelmann on July 24, 1941. He in turn was replaced by General Franz Boehme in late September, 1941.

[30]Rich, p. 285.

[31]Ibid., p. 289.

[32]Marjanovich, "Information on People's Liberation War", p. 286, 288.

[33]Hehn, "Serbia, Croatia, and Germany", p. 351.

[34]Tomasevich, "Yugoslavia during WW II", p. 80.

[35]Wolff, The Balkans in Our Time, p. 204. The Serbian police were responsible to the German military authorities until January, 1942, when they were subordinated to the command of the senior SS and police officer in Serbia, SS Gruppenführer and General of the Police August Meyszner; Rich, p. 284.

[36]In mid-November Glaise's title was changed to that of Plenipotentiary German General in Croatia. Rich, p. 280.

[37]Ibid., p. 278.

[38]Ibid.

[39]Ibid., p. 280. In November 1942 the new post of Commanding General of German Troops in Croatia was set up and to it was appointed General Rudolph Lüters, a highly decorated veteran of the First World War. He was responsible for operations carried out by German troops in all the Croatian territory between the Sava River and the German-Italian demarcation line while General Glaise assumed the responsibility for the German troops in the Croatian territory between the Sava and Drava Rivers. Tomasevich, The Chetniks, p. 100; U.S. Dept. of the Army, p. 27.

[40]Rich, p. 279.

[41]List held the post until October 25, 1941, when he was forced to relinquish it due to ill-health. His successor was General of Engineers Walter Kuntze who remained Armed Forces Commander Southeast until August 8, 1942.

[42]Mueller-Hillebrand, Das Heer 1933-1945 Volume II, p. 87. In December, 1942, however, the Armed Forces Commander Southeast was given supreme command over all German forces in the Balkans. Rich, p. 280.

[43]U.S. Dept. of the Army, p. 15-16.

[44]KTB I/1/398.

[45]U.S. Dept. of the Army, p. 16.

[46]Ibid.

[47]Mueller-Hillebrand, Das Heer Volume II, p. 173; William J. Davies, German Army Handbook 1939-1945 (New York: Arco Publishing Co., Inc., 1974), p. 40. The one exception to this pattern was the 196th Infantry Division of the 7th Wave which received two infantry regiments. Mueller-Hillebrand, Das Heer Volume II, p. 169.

[48]The accepted total strength of a German army division during the Second World War is generally considered to have been somewhere in the area of 12,000 to 15,000 men. This figure is, of course, highly theoretical since, in practice, the strengths of German army divisions varied enormously.

[49]Kommandierender General und Befehlshaber in Serbien an den Wehrmachtbefehlshaber Südost, "Führer Befehl Nummer 1", October 21, 1942, Record of German Army Field Commands, U.S. National Archives, T 501/352/368-369.

[50]Ibid.

[51]U.S. Dept. of the Army, p. 16, 25.

[52]Tomasevich, The Chetniks, p. 97.

[53]At the time of the first postings in Yugoslavia for the four 700-level German divisions the following officers were in command of these divisions: Major General Heinrich Borowski (704th Division), Major General Friedrich Stahl (714th Division), Major General Paul Hoffmann (717th Division), and Major General Johann Fortner (718th Division, Wolf Keilig, Das Deutsche Heer 1939-1945 Volume I (Bad Nauheim: Verlag Hans Henning Podzun, 1956), p. 26.

[54]Marjanovich, "Information on the People's Liberation War", p. 277.

[55]KTB II/1/138.

[56]U.S. Dept. of the Army, p. 19. Komm. Gen. u. Bef. in Serb. an den W.B. Südost, (Untitled), September 5, 1942, T 501/352/58.

[57]U.S. Dept. of the Army, p. 19.

[58]The term "Chetnik" actually means guerrilla fighter. It dates back to the Serbian guerrilla fighters who fought against the Turkish occupiers during the early 19th century. The "legalized" Chetniks of the Second World War were generally those soldiers who had fought as guerrilla fighters during the First World War or had sons who belonged to the Chetnik veterans group, "The Chetnik Association for Freedom and Honor". They were "legalized" units in the sense that they were fighting against insurgency with German approval and support. This definition of the "legalized" Chetniks is complicated by the fact that after November 1941, the Mihailovich Chetniks, or the so-called "illegal" Chetniks, began increasingly to infiltrate the ranks of the "legalized" Chetniks. This infiltration was more to provide survival and protection over the winter months than anything else, however.

[59]U.S. Dept. of the Army, p. 19.

[60]Komm. Gen. u. Bef. in Serbien an 104 Jaeger Div. "Lagebericht für die Zeit vom 17. Mai-2. Juni, 1943", June 3, 1943, T315/1243/704.

[61]U.S. Dept. of the Army, p. 19.

[62]Ibid.

[63]Der Höhere SS und Polizeiführer in Serbien "Bericht über die Organisation der Serbischen Staatswache im Zuge der Umorganisation der Serbischen Polizei", March 13, 1943, T315/1242/525.

[64]104th Jaeger Div. "Feindlagebericht für die Zeit vom 16. bis 29. Januar, 1943", January 29, 1943, Records of German Field Commands: Divisions. U.S. National Archives, T315/1243/752.

[65]Komm. Gen. u. Bef. i. Serbien "Lagebericht für die Zeit vom 19. bis 29. Januar, 1943", January 29, 1943, T315/1243/971.

[66]Hehn, p. 351; Hermann Neubacher, Sonderauftrag Südost, 1940-1945: Bericht eines fliegenden Diplomaten (Göttingen, Berlin, Frankfurt: Musterschmidt Verlag, 1956), p. 154.

[67]U.S. Dept. of the Army, p. 19; Tomasevich, The Chetniks, p. 110.

[68]Neubacher, p. 154; Militärbefehlshaber Südost an OKH "Lagebericht Befehlsbereich Serbien für die Zeit vom 16. Dezember 1943-1. Januar, 1944", January 16, 1944, T501/352/919.

[69]Komm. Gen. u. Bef. in Serbien "Verzeichnis der vom Kdr. Gen. u. Bef. in Serbien genehmigten Cetnik und Freiwilligenabteilungen im Serbischen Raum Stand vom 18.11. 1942", November 18, 1942, T501/352/57; Tomasevich, "Yugoslavia during WW II", p. 80.

[70]104. Jaeger Div. "Lagebericht für die Zeit vom 1.-14. April, 1943", April 14, 1943, T315/1243/792.

[71]In March 1943, there were 45 deserters from the Serbian State Guard, while in April 1943, there were 12 deserters from the Serbian Volunteer Corps. 104. Jaeger Div. "Verluste im Monat März, 1943", April 2, 1943, T315/1249/984; 104. Jaeger Div. "Darstellung der Ereignisse", May 1, 1943, T315/1244/6.

[72]Marjanovich, "Information on the People's Liberation War", p. 287.

[73]Komm. Gen. u. Bef. in Serbien an W.B. Südost "Cetniks", December 1, 1942, T501/352/809.

[74]Ibid.

[75]Ibid., Tomasevich, The Chetniks, p. 128.

[76]Ibid.

[77]KTB II/2/33. At the end of 1943, the total strength of the Ustasha was 64,000 men. At the end of 1944, 114,000 men were deployed in three Ustasha divisions and in twenty-one brigades. Franz Schraml, Kriegsschauplatz Kroatien: Die Deutsche-Kroatischen Legionsdivisionen (Neckargemünd: Kurt Vowinckel Verlag, 1962), p. 24.

[78]Adolf von Ernsthausen, Die Wölfe der Lika: Mit Legionären, Ustaschi, Domobranen, und Tschetniks gegen Titos Partisanen. Erlebnisse in Kroatien 1944 (Neckargemünd: Kurt Vowinckel Verlag, 1959), p. 14.

[79]Wilhelm Hoettl, The Secret Front: The Story of Nazi Political Espionage (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1954), p. 163.

[80]German Plenipotentiary General in Croatia, (Untitled), June 16, 1942, T501/266/55.

[81]Hehn, p. 349.

[82]Tomasevich, "Yugoslavia during WW II", p. 78-79, 369.

[83]KTB II/1/418.

[84]Pavelich himself assumed the command of the Croatian Home Guard on October 6, 1942.

[85]Rudolph Kiszling, Die Kroaten: Der Schicksalweg eines Südslawenvolkes (Graz-Koln: Verlag Hermann Böhlaus Nachf., 1956), p. 180.

[86]Tomasevich, The Chetniks, p. 108.

[87]W.B. Südost, "Schlagswortartige Niederschrift der geführten Gespräche bei den Besprechungen in Abazzia", March 2, 1942, T 501/267/471-472.

[88]Lothar Rendulic, Gekämpft, Gesiegt, Geschlagen (Heidelberg: Verlag Welsermühl, 1952), p. 170.

[89]Tomasevich, The Chetniks, p. 107.

[90]The 369th Croatian Infantry Division should not be confused with the 369th Croatian Infantry Regiment which was formed by Croatian volunteers and German officers in early July, 1941 and sent to the Eastern Front in early August. The 369th Croatian Infantry Regiment perished with the German 6th Army at Stalingrad. Schraml, p. 23-24.

[91]Ibid., p. 30.

[92]One excellent example of this assumption is a report from the Commander of the 718th Infantry Division to the Commander of German Troops in Croatia dated January 9, 1943. In this report the commander writes, "The Croatian soldier is modest, hard, stubborn, and brave under German leadership and under our energetic officers he performs excellently in the offensive as well as in the defensive." 718th Infantry Division an Befehlshaber der deutschen Truppe in Kroatien, "Kroatisches Heer", January 9, 1943, T 315/1294/93.

[93]KTB III/2/1018.

[94]Phleps, an ethnic German who was born in Rumania, rose to the rank of general in the Rumanian Army before joining the Germany Army in 1941. He gave up the command of the Prinz Eugen division on June 21, 1943 and was succeeded by SS Brigadeführer and Major General of the Waffen SS Carl Reichsritter von Oberkamp. He in turn held this position until February 1944. Roger Bender and Hugh Taylor, Uniforms, Organization, and History of the Waffen-SS Volume Three, (Mountain View, California: R. James Bender Publishing, 1972), p. 18.

[95]Ibid.

[96]Komm. Gen. u. Bef. in Serbien an der W.B. Südost, Führerbefehl Nummer 1", October 21, 1942, T 501/352/370.

[97]Tomasevich, "Yugoslavia during WW II", p. 113.

[98]Bender and Taylor, Uniforms, Organization, and History of the Waffen-SS, p. 142.

[99]Marjanovich, "Information on the People's Liberation War", p. 9.

[100]Plenipotentiary German General in Croatia, "Bericht über die Lage in Kroatien in der Zweiten Hälfte Februars, 1942", February 25, 1942, T 501/266/160.

[101]The Ciano Diaries, ed. Malcolm Muggerridge (London, Toronto: William Heinemann Ltd., 1948), p. 420.

[102]Marjanovich, "Information on the People's Liberation War", p. 9.

[103]The occupation zone was expanded in the north up to a line running south of Bor, Lapovo, and Kragujevac, and in the south as far as the old Serbian frontier, Ibid., 269.

[104]Tomasevich, "Yugoslavia during WW II", p. 79.

[105]Ibid.; U.S. Dept. of the Army, p. 24.

[106]Komm. Gen. u. Bef. in Serbien an den W.B. Sudost, "Führerbefehl Nummer 1", October 21, 1942, T 501/352/370.

[107]Wolff, p. 206; U.S. Dept. of the Army, p. 24.

[108]U.S. Dept. of the Army, p. 18.

[109]Ibid.

[110]Marjanovich, "Information on the People's Liberation War", p. 9.

[111]Ibid., p. 13.

CHAPTER TWO

The Outbreak of Insurrection in Yugoslavia And Early German Anti-Guerrilla Operations, 1941-1942

In early July 1941 the Axis occupation forces in Yugoslavia were slapped out of an almost lulling complacency by a sudden, explosive wave of insurrection, and most contemporary historians have accepted the validity of these claims. However, it would be a grave error to view the Communist-led Partisans as the sole or even predominant resistance force in Yugoslavia either during the July insurrection or for a long time afterwards. In order to fully comprehend the outbreak of insurgency in Yugoslavia it is necessary to examine briefly the events which followed the capitulation of the Yugoslav army on April 14, 1941.

In obedience to the capitulation order given by their supreme command on April 14, 1941, a total of 344,162 officers, non-commissioned officers, and men of the Yugoslav army surrendered to the Axis forces.[1] At the same time, however, an almost equal number of Yugoslav soldiers disobeyed the capitulation order and fled into the rugged forests and mountains which constitute a large part of Yugoslavia.[2] For many, this act of defiance lasted only a few days. Overcome by the harsh reality of defeat and the hardship of existing in the wilderness, they returned homeward. Yet other Yugoslav army personnel remained in the forests and mountains where they searched for ways and means to hamper the enemy.

The German military authorities' lack of concern with rebellious Yugoslav army personnel was reflected by the fact that they did not even order Belgrade searched for uncaptured soldiers until after the

outbreak of insurrection in July.[3] While this attitude was plainly careless, it was also understandable. It must have seemed almost unimaginable to the Germans that insurgency could have sprung up in a nation so recently and totally vanquished in battle. In addition, the hasty withdrawal of many crack German units as soon as the campaign was concluded meant that there was no final mopping up of rebellious elements in Yugoslavia.[4]

In the weeks after the capitulation some Yugoslav soldiers were shaking off the effects of the demoralizing defeat and to form what would become one of the two major resistance forces in Yugoslavia -- the Chetniks. This group, not to be confused with the "legalized" Chetniks under Kosta Pecanac, was led by Colonel (later General) Draza Mihailovich. Mihailovich, a well-decorated veteran of both Balkan Wars and World War One, was a staunch supporter of the Yugoslav monarchy and a fervent believer in the Serbian hegemony in Yugoslavia. In defiance of his superior's capitulation order Mihailovich led a small, tattered group of soldiers from Bosnia into Western Serbia during late April 1941. In the middle of May 1941 Mihailovich and his followers arrived at Ravna Gora, a remote village in a mountainous region about 100 kilometers south of Belgrade. At that time Mihailovich's force, which was named "Chetnik Detachments of the Yugoslav Army" by Mihailovich and his men to evoke memories of the heroic Chetnik fighters of World War One, numbered only 7 officers and 26 non-commissioned officers and men.[5] However, the ranks of Mihailovich's Chetniks were quickly filled by many of the Yugoslav military personnel who had avoided capture by the Axis. By the fall of 1941 the Chetniks numbered about 3,000 to 4,000 men.[6]

The Chetniks were organized into brigades, with three companies per brigade (*two combat companies and one replacement company*), and anywhere from three to eight brigades made up a Chetnik army corps which was subordinated to an area headquarters (roughly equivalent to an army level).[7] Area headquarters were directly responsible to Mihailovich, but he seems to have made few attempts to keep in personal touch with his area commanders and usually relied instead on maintaining contact through touring staff officers.[8] This lack of personal contact between Mihailovich and his area commanders seems symptomatic of the flagrant morale problems that would plague the Chetniks throughout the war. "Chetnik units as a whole", writes Jozo Tomasevich, "were lacking in discipline from their chieftains down to the rank and file. And coordination among units was poor and often non-existent."[9]

Lack of discipline and poor coordination are scarcely the gravest accusations that have been made against the Chetniks. There also existed a widespread unwillingness among the majority of Chetnik leaders to launch either strong or sustained attacks against Axis forces. This attitude stemmed largely from Mihailovich's fear that a premature deployment of his forces would only result in massive German retaliation against Serbian civilians.[10] Instead Mihailovich counted on the British (and after 1941 the Western Allies generally) to eventually open up a second front in the Balkans. This, he felt, would inevitably lead to a retreat by the Axis forces in the region. Mihailovich reasoned that during such a retreat the Chetniks could quickly and easily seize the reins of power until the king and the exiled Yugoslav government could resume control of the country. To prevent a premature engagement of his forces Mihailovich was prepared to go to any length, even to the point of

collaborating with local Axis commanders.

Large-scale collaboration between Chetnik commanders and the Italian army authorities in Montenegro and the Italian sector of the Independent State of Croatia had already commenced by the early summer of 1941.[11] During the same period Chetnik forces in Serbia began to collaborate with the Nedich government by attaching themselves to Nedichist military units and aiding them in their fight against the Partisans.[12] After the Italians withdrew from the war on September 8, 1943, the Chetniks sought to enter a collaborative arrangement with the Germans. In the fall of 1943 the German High Command, which had formerly held firm against any accommodation with the enemy in Yugoslavia, agreed to negotiations between local German and Chetnik commanders. As a result the first of several truces was concluded on November 19, 1943 between the German Commander in Serbia and Chetnik Staff 148.[13] However, these armistice agreements were revoked by the Germans in February 1944, no doubt due to German mistrust of the Chetniks.[14]

In reality, the Chetniks posed a very limited political and military threat to the German forces in Yugoslavia, especially after 1942. Yet the German High Command, and Hitler in particular, continued to ascribe to the Chetniks a large measure of political influence which it had never had. Hitler's concern about the Chetniks as a political threat did not stem from any real menace that the Chetniks posed in their own right but rather from what their potential threat would be if the Western Allies made a second front in the Balkans.[15] Even in February 1943, when the Partisans were by far the greatest challenge to the continued Axis hold on Yugoslavia, Hitler still felt the Chetniks were as great a threat as the Partisans. This is evident from an excerpt of a letter written by

Hitler to Mussolini and presented by German Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop on February 21, 1943.

> If a landing takes place tomorrow, Duce, anywhere in the Balkans, the Communists, followers of Mihailovich and all the other irregulars will be in accord on one thing: launching an immediate attack on the German or Italian armed forces (as the case may be) in support of the enemy landings. I consider it disastrous, Duce, that after we have conquered the whole area in battle there should still exist armed and politically organized persons ready to turn against us in any emergency.[16]

Part of the exaggerated German view of the Chetnik's strength can be explained in terms of the lack of German information on the movement. Not until July 1942 were the Germans finally successful in intercepting and decoding Chetnik radio messages in Serbia.[17] This breakthrough did not, however, alter the German High Command's perception of the Chetniks in 1943. The most likely reason for this longstanding overestimation of the Chetnik's political strength seems to have been German fears that an Allied invasion of the Balkans would help the cause of the Chetniks more than it would that of the Partisans.[18] Such fears led the German High Command to overlook the numerous signs that the Chetniks had grown militarily and politically bankrupt.

While Mihailovich's Chetniks were slowly building up their forces during early June 1941, infrequent, small-scale attacks were launched against Ustasha forces in Herzegovina. These attacks appear to have been the work of embittered Serbs retaliating against the Ustasha for atrocities committed against the Serbian population of Herzegovina.[19] While isolated actions by heroic individuals occurred in other areas of Yugoslavia, it was not until the Communist-led and organized insurrection in July that a centralized, systematic campaign against the occupying forces got underway in Yugoslavia. The Communist Party of Yugoslavia

(CPY) had been outlawed since April 1921 and the effectiveness with which it had been suppressed can be seen by the fact that at the beginning of 1940 it numbered only 8,000 members.[20] However, the long years of underground struggle during the interwar years and the participation of several thousand party members in the Spanish Civil War served as a vital training ground for wartime.

At the time of the Axis invasion of Yugoslavia the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, since 1937 under the direction of Party Secretary Josip Broz Tito, seems to have been inactive.[21] It is also plain that the insurrection launched by the party in July 1941 was carried out largely in retaliation for the German attack on the Soviet Union. Phyllis Auty confirms that Tito did hold a meeting with his most influential party colleagues on April 10, 1941 and that a "War Committee of the Party" was set up to lead a communist revolution.[22] However, it was not until the Soviet Union was invaded by German troops on June 22nd that the Party set up a "Supreme Staff of the National Partisan Units" (under the leadership of Tito), and only on July 4th did the Supreme Staff call for an immediate armed revolt against the Axis occupiers.[23] Responding to the call for insurrection, Communist-led uprisings broke out in both Serbia and Montenegro.[24] This insurrection took the form of numerous acts of sabotage against transportation lines, attacks (in Serbia) against German military vehicles travelling alone or in convoy, and assaults directed against isolated German detachments guarding industrial and military installations.[25] However, in the initial weeks of the insurrection it was the Nedich administration which bore the brunt of the rebel blows, especially gendarmerie stations and communication networks.[26]

The scope of the insurrection broadened considerably during the

course of the late summer and early fall of 1941, particularly in Serbia. There the weak German 700-level divisions had proven to be unequal to the task of containing the spreading insurrection. By September 1941 the Partisans had assumed some measure of control over a large area of Serbia extending from the suburbs of Belgrade to the towns of Uzhitse and Krusevac (both of which the Germans had been forced to abandon).[27] Since this removal of Serbian territory from full German authority was accomplished with only the minimum of Chetnik support, the Partisans had, by September 1941, taken the initiative away from the Chetniks. Tito's forces then numbered some 15,000 men, while Mihailovich had only about 5,000 men under his command.[28] Realizing that his opportunity to influence events was slowly slipping away, Mihailovich, probably as early as mid-September and definitely by early October, ordered some of the Chetnik units to support the Partisan forces.[29] However, these supportive actions were few, and despite two meetings between Tito and Mihailovich the ideological chasm which separated the hardline communist and the fervent Serbian chauvinist was too vast. By early November the two groups had begun to launch assaults against each other, and to the chaos of insurrection was added civil war.

During the early months of the insurrection the weak German units in Yugoslavia were forced to concentrate more on the safeguarding and fortifying of communication lines, towns, and other strategic points than on actively combatting the scrappy Partisan units.[30] It was clear by the late summer of 1941 that the continuance of such a defensive strategy was only allowing the initiative to slip further out of German hands and into those of the Partisans. Therefore, on September 16, 1941, Hitler, at the request of Field Marshall List (the Armed Forces Commander for the South-

east), issued a directive calling for the "immediate restoration of order in Serbia by the harshest and most vigorous means."[31] To implement that policy Hitler, two days earlier, had appointed General of the Infantry Franz Boehme (Commander of the XVIII Mountain Corps) as the supreme commander of German forces in all areas of unrest in the south-east European sector. As "Plenipotentiary Commanding General in Serbia", Boehme was given authority over all German military and administrative personnel in Serbia, including the Commander in Serbia.[32] Hitler also ordered the German High Command to transfer one German infantry division to aid the troops in Serbia (and to send another division to Serbia as soon as it became available), to provide armoured trains and captured tanks, and to furnish further security forces to both Serbia and Croatia.[33] The German 125th Infantry Regiment, which had already been ordered by the Armed Forces Commander for the Southeast to move from the Salonika area on September 5th, was joined in Belgrade by the German 342nd Infantry Division (along with the 100th Tank Brigade) on September 26th.[34] In addition to these forces the German 113th Infantry Division arrived in Serbia from the Eastern Front in late October.

Hitler's directive of September 16, 1941 not only resulted in the temporary reinforcement of the German 700-level divisions in Yugoslavia, it also introduced a measure which served to intensify the Serbian hatred for the German occupiers. In this same directive Field Marshal Keitel issued a general order that one hundred hostages were to be executed for every German killed and fifty hostages for every German soldier wounded.[35] Only in Serbia was the order actually carried out, and the most horrible example of its implementation was the punishment meted out to the Serbian town of Kragujevac on October 21st and 22nd, 1941.

On October 15, 1941, the 3rd Battalion of the 920th German Infantry Regiment had been attacked outside Kragujevac by Partisan and Chetnik units acting separately, and it had sustained losses of 10 dead and 26 wounded.[36] In retaliation the 920th Infantry Regiment ran amock in Kragujevac on October 21st and 22nd, killing as many as 7,000 inhabitants.[37] The unbridled savageness with which the Germans conducted this massacre is illustrated by Jozo Tomasevich's description of the event.

> So insanely indiscriminate was the slaughter that not only whole classes of high school pupils with their teachers, but according to German documents some of their own confidential agents, some Croats, and the entire personnel of some of the armament plants working for the Wehrmacht were shot.38

This massive retaliatory action by German forces against the Serbian population was by far the harshest single punishment directed against Yugoslav civilians during the Second World War. Contrary to Hitler's intentions, retaliatory measures fanned rebellion rather than crushed it. Ruthless actions carried out by the German units were repaid in full measure by their Partisan adversaries. The ferociousness with which these two antagonists grappled with each other was only occasionally surpassed by the battles of annihilation fought between the Partisans and Chetniks.

On September 28, 1941, a few days after its arrival in Serbia from France, the German 342nd Infantry Division, supported by tanks from the 100th Tank Brigade, launched the first major German-led anti-guerrilla operation in Yugoslavia. It pushed across the Sava River at Sabac and then moved south into the Partisan-controlled area of southwest Serbia. The 342nd Division soon encountered stiff resistance from Partisan units whose attacks were frequently of a frontal nature.[39] The advance by the

342nd Division soon wound down and not until late November did it finally reach Valjevo. From that point onward, the operation appears to have expanded in scope. This is evident by the arrival in late October of the combat-tested 113th Infantry Division in Serbia from the Eastern Front, and also by the assigning of several of the 700-level divisions to a more active role in the operation. Beginning in late October the Partisan-held area in southwestern Serbia was entered on a 125 mile front by the 342nd Division, the 113th Division, parts of the 714th and 717th divisions, along with elements of Nedich's Serbian State Guard and the Serbian Volunteer Battalion.[40]

The increase in the number of German and quisling troops involved in the operation from late October onward is certainly not the only important change made by the Germans. Vladimir Dedijer, a colonel in the Partisan army and a well-known postwar Yugoslav historian, points out that the Germans made certain tactical adjustments after late October. His description of the tactics used by German units during the first month of the operation is more reminiscent of accounts of 19th century warfare rather than those of the 20th century.

> When they attacked the positions of the Partisans they advanced calmly as if they were on a parade ground, when one fell another soldier immediately took his place and continued to advance with the same calm, deliberate step.41

By late October, however, Dedijer notes that the Germans had both reconsidered and readjusted their tactics. Describing what he calls the "second phase" of the operation (late October to late November 1941) he states that

> This time the Germans changed their tactics. They advanced cautiously along the main lines of approach, clearing the way with artillery and aircraft while endeavouring to outflank the Partisan position by means of powerful infantry elements.42

During the period from late October to late November 1941 the 342nd Infantry Division appears to have remained in the Valjevo area where it presumably carried out smallscale anti-guerrilla assaults.[43] On November 25th, however, the 342nd Division, along with the 113th Infantry Division from Kraljevo, launched a powerful surprise attack against Tito's headquarters at Uzhitse.[44] According to a situation map showing this German assault on Uzhitse, the 342nd Division was either split into two forces or it acted in conjunction with another unit.[45] One of these forces left Valjevo on November 25th and pushed southward toward Uzhitse while the second force moved westward from Valjevo to the Drina River and then southward to Uzhitse.[46] At the same time the 113th Division was moving toward Uzhitse from Kraljevo in the east. However, no German or quisling units appear to have been deployed south of Uzhitse which allowed Tito's forces to withdraw in a southerly direction on the very day the German attack began.[47] On November 29th, when the tank-supported German units entered Uzhitse, most of the Partisan troops had already retired into the barren Zlatibor mountain range which dominates the frontier between Serbia and the Sandzak region.[48] The first of the major German-led anti-guerrilla operations was thus concluded with the Partisans in retreat and with southwestern Serbia back under German domination.

From all appearances this first operation seems to have been regarded as a success by both the local German military authorities in Serbia and by the German High Command. The most significant indication of German satisfaction with the result of the operation was the transfer of General Boehme, the Plenipotentiary Commanding General in Serbia, and the staff of the XVIII Army Corps from Serbia to Finland.[49] Such confidence was not unfounded as far as it concerned future Partisan

fortunes in Serbia. After their withdrawal from Serbia in late November 1941, the Partisans were unable to reassert any real influence there until early 1944. Indeed, their fortunes in Serbia were so dismal that in June 1942 the regional Partisan commander reported to Tito that there were only 852 Partisans in all of Serbia.[50] Instead of the Partisan movement being the dominant resistance group in Serbia, it was the Chetniks who assumed this position in 1942. However, the Chetniks were also the target of a German anti-guerrilla operation in late 1941 which, though on a minor scale, forced the Chetniks underground for most of the winter.[51]

Yet the first major German-led anti-guerrilla operation only pushed the Partisans out of Serbia. It did not eliminate the Partisans as a persistent and effective resistance force. Despite being involved in often fierce fighting against an enemy vastly superior in numbers and weaponry, Tito's Partisan detachments fought stubbornly. When the operation was concluded, Tito's forces were not only still intact but they had also increased their numbers to 80,000 men.[52] The withdrawal of Partisan units from Serbia into the inaccessible Sandzak area was only a temporary measure. By December 17, 1941 the Partisan Supreme Command and the units attached to it had moved out of the Sandzak region and into Eastern Bosnia.[53]

In the lull between the conclusion of the first major anti-guerrilla operation in late November 1941 and the beginning of the second such operation on January 15, 1942, Tito made a significant organizational change in the Partisan military units. During the fighting against the Germans in Serbia, many of the inexperienced, semi-military Partisan detachments had felt they were fighting only to protect their own

villages.[54] Many Partisans even slept at home with their families as the fighting went on.[55] After witnessing these occurrences Tito came to believe that the Partisan detachments had to be organized into what he called "purely military formations".[56] This reorganization was begun at Rudo in the Sandzak on December 22nd, when the First Proletarian Brigade came into existence. It was made up of an initial contingent of 1,199 Serbian and Montenegrin volunteers.[57] The brigade commander was Kocha Popovich, a Serbian communist who had seen action in the Spanish Civil War. The First Proletarian Brigade, and the other twenty-six brigades formed subsequently, were designated as shock troops to be thrown into the fray on any front.[58] Since the brigades often operated outside their home area they were far more likely to engage in attacks on the enemy than had Partisan detachments in Serbia who often feared enemy reprisals against their family and friends.[59] With this reorganization of his forces Tito would bring into being what would become the fundamental nucleus of his forces. However, this reorganization had little or no effect in the second major German-led anti-guerrilla operation which began less than a month after the First Proletarian Brigade was formed.

This second operation was brief, lasting just eleven days from January 15th to 26th, 1942. The operation took place in Eastern Bosnia where it focused specifically on the area between and to the north of Sarajevo and Visegrad, where roughly 4,000 insurgents had concentrated.[60] The Axis units which took part in this operation were the German 342nd and 718th Divisions, various Croatian military units (chiefly those of the Ustasha), and four Italian divisions from Montenegro.[61] When the operation began on January 15th, the 718th Division moved eastward from Sarajevo toward the insurgent concentration area, the 342nd Division

crossed into Eastern Bosnia from Serbia and pushed westward, and Croatian units seem to have moved in from the north.[62] The basic intention of the operation was to destroy the guerrillas in place or force them southward where the four Italian divisions were to block their escape route.[63]

The operation proved to be an arduous undertaking for friend and foe alike. Deep snow and temperatures between -20 to -30 degrees Centigrade prevailed through the duration of the operation and resulted in nearly 300 cases of frostbite among the German troops alone.[64] The majority of insurgents in the encirclement area managed to avoid destruction in place by outmaneuvering the main enemy assault forces in the deep snow and pushing southward.[65] The four Italian divisions, which were to have moved up to the demarcation line separating the Italian and German interest spheres in the Independent State of Croatia, had mistimed their movement and arrived in position too late to prevent many insurgents from escaping into the Italian sector of the Independent State of Croatia.[66] Due to Italian miscalculations the operation succeeded only in hurting the Chetnik and Partisan units, instead of destroying them. The operation was broken off on January 26th. It was deemed by the Germans a tactical success since 521 insurgents had been killed and 1,331 captured at a cost of only 25 German soldiers killed and 131 wounded.[67]

During early 1942 the already limited authority of the Pavelich regime in the Independent State of Croatia was further reduced as south and east Bosnia, Herzegovina, and Dalmatia came under the control of either the Chetniks or Partisans. Soon after thwarting attempts to annihilate them in the second operation, the Partisans set up their

political and military headquarters at Focha, an East Bosnian town in the Italian sector of the Independent State of Croatia. Here the Partisans received a few months of reprieve from largescale enemy operations. Not until May 10, 1942 did the Partisans leave Focha, and then it was to escape the onslaught of the Axis forces engaged in the third major German-led anti-guerrilla operation.[68]

The third operation was different in several respects from the two operations that had preceded it. To begin with, it took place in the Italian sector of the Independent State of Croatia, rather than in a German occupation area or sphere of influence. Nevertheless, the German forces involved in this third operation, as in all seven of the major anti-guerrilla operations in Yugoslavia, were under the authority of a German commander. In the third operation General Bader, the Commander in Serbia, was named task force commander, though he was theoretically under the operational control of the Italian Second Army.[69]

Another important difference between the third major anti-guerrilla operation and the two preceding ones was that it was the first largescale Axis counterinsurgency operation in which Chetnik units fought together with the Axis against the Partisans.[70] The exact numbers or units of Chetniks that took part in the third operation is not known. However, it would appear that the Chetnik involvement was an Italian inspiration since the Chetniks fought alongside Italian troops and because no evidence has come to light to show that the Germans had any knowledge of Chetnik involvement at the time the operation was in progress.

It is certain that the German 718th Infantry Division and four Italian divisions (the Marche, Murge, Messina, and Taro Divisions) took part in the third operation.[71] It is also known that troops from the German "700-level" divisions, the Croatian Home Guard and the Ustasha saw

action during this operation, although the exact identity of these units has not been established.[72] The operation began on April 20, 1942 and was directed against the Partisan-dominated area of Eastern Bosnia. The chief target of the assault was Partisan headquarters at Focha, where Tito had under his immediate command no less than five Partisan brigades numbering roughly 1,000 men each.[73] Like the second operation, the third was also an operation of encirclement. The 718th Division, along with various Ustasha and Home Guard units, had concentrated north of Focha in mid-April and pushed southward while German troops from Serbia and other Croatian Home Guard forces moved toward Focha from the south and east.[74] Simultaneously the four Italian divisions, supported by Chetnik forces, moved westward from bases in the Italian sphere of influence in the Independent State of Croatia. The task of the Italian units in this operation, like that of the second operation, was to form another blocking line, this time along the Neretva River.[75]

According to Vladimir Dedijer, the operation "developed sluggishly and the Italians advanced slowly."[76] The operation seems to have bogged down for several weeks until May 4th, when an all-out German drive was made against Focha.[77] Axis efforts to push the Partisans westward appear to have been successful but the Italians again failed to fulfill their operational role. As the Partisans were being forced westward the Italian divisions, which had not yet reached the blocking line, were actually reducing the number of Italian troops in the area.[78] Through the gap created by the Italians in the encirclement ring, Tito's forces were able to escape to the south and southwest. The Partisan Supreme Command and their escort troops withdrew to the barren, mountainous region of Montenegro where they remained briefly. The third major German-led anti-guerrilla operation ended unsuccessfully in late May. By June 12, 1942, Tito's main Partisan force had moved back into Eastern Bosnia.[79]

The relative ineffectiveness of the first three major German-led anti-guerrilla operations was dramatically revealed on June 24th, when Tito's main Partisan army switched from the defensive to the offensive. In the next four and a half months this force pushed north from Eastern Bosnia into Croatia, a distance of some 200 miles.[80] The march route was through mountainous terrain about 200 kilometers parallel to the Yugoslav coastline, where the only resistance was from Chetnik detachments or weak Croatian units.[81] Town after town fell in the Partisan advance. Konjich was captured on July 8th, Mrkonjich Grad on August 24th, Jajce on September 28th, and, lastly, Bihach on November 5th.[82] At Bihach Tito set up his headquarters and provided his troops with several months of rest after their arduous journey. The Partisans were now in control of an area extending from near Karlovac in the north to the western approaches of the Neretva river in the south, a region some 250 kilometers long and 40 to 70 kilometers wide.[83]

It is now apparent that the Germans had already spent their best chance to annihilate the Partisan forces by 1942. Tito's units had not only escaped destruction in the first three major anti-guerrilla operations. They had also gained control of more territory as a result of their offensive into Croatia. By the fall of 1942 Partisan strength had increased to roughly 150,000 men.[84] To cripple a force of this size appeared to be an overwhelming task. Yet three times in 1943 the Germans assembled large operation groups to attempt just such a task.

NOTES FOR CHAPTER TWO

[1]Tomasevich, The Chetniks, p. 74.

[2]Wolff, p. 206.

[3]Milazzo, p. 15.

[4]Ibid., p. 5.

[5]Tomasevich, "Yugoslavia during WW II", p. 82; Milazzo, p. 14.

[6]Milazzo, p. 18.

[7]U.S. Dept. of the Army, p. 31.

[8]Deakin, The Embattled Mountain (London, New York, Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 76.

[9]Tomasevich, "Yugoslavia during WW II", p. 95.

[10]U.S. Dept. of the Army, p. 20-21.

[11]Tomasevich, "Yugoslavia during WW II", p. 93.

[12]Ibid.

[13]Ibid.; Walter R. Roberts, Tito, Mihailovich, and the Allies, 1941-1945 (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1973), p. 157.

[14]Tomasevich, The Chetniks, p. 337.

[15]Milazzo, p. 155.

[16]Deakin, Brutal Friendship, p. 185.

[17]Milazzo, p. 87-88.

[18]Ibid., p. 106.

[19]Tomasevich, "Yugoslavia during WW II", p. 80.

[20]Milazzo, p. 20.

[21]Neubacher, p. 165; Kiszling, p. 182. Josip Broz was born in Croatia in 1892, the son of a peasant. Josip was trained as a locksmith before being called up to serve in the Austro-Hungarian army in 1914. He was seriously wounded and captured by the Russians in 1915. He witnessed the Russian Revolution and returned to Yugoslavia a dedicated Communist in the early 1920's. Broz was imprisoned for illegal party activity from 1928 to 1934. In 1937 he was appointed the Secretary General of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia. The nickname "Tito" was just one of many aliases used by Broz. He first made use of it at a Central Committee meeting held in Vienna in 1934. Duncan Wilson, Tito's

Yugoslavia (London, New York, etc.: Cambridge University Press, 1979), p. 16-17; Auty, p. 111.

[22]Auty, p. 203.

[23]Milazzo, p. 20; KTB I/1, p. 1216. Milovan Djilas, a Supreme Staff member, stresses that despite the formation of the Supreme Staff it was Tito who was the personal and absolute commander of the Partisan forces. Milovan Djilas, Wartime, trans. Michael B. Petrovich (New York and London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich Inc., 1977), p. 183.

[24]Frederick Deakin contends that the reason why there was not a similar outbreak of insurrection in Croatia in July 1941 was that the main Communist Party Committee in Croatia had been arrested before 1941. Deakin, Embattled Mountain, p. 99.

[25]U.S. Dept. of the Army, p. 22.

[26]Milazzo, p. 21.

[27]Wolff, p. 208; Dedijer et al., History of Yugoslavia, p. 601. Uzhitse was particularly useful to the Partisans since it had a rifle factory.

[28]Laqueur, p. 216.

[29]Milazzo, p. 27.

[30]Ahmet Djonlagich, Zarko Atanockovich, Dusan Plenca, Yugoslavia in the Second World War, English trans. Lovett F. Edwards (Belgrade: Medjunarodna Stampa Interpress, 1967), p. 70.

[31]Rich, p. 292.

[32]Ibid., 285.

[33]U.S. Dept. of the Army, p. 23.

[34]Ibid., p. 22-23; Dedijer et al., History of Yugoslavia, p. 603.

[35]Tomasevich, "Yugoslavia during WW II", p. 90. In February 1943 this ratio of executing 100 hostages for every German soldier killed was reduced to a ratio of 50 to 1. The ratio was finally done away with altogether in October 1943 after much effort by Hermann Neubacher, the Special Plenipotentiary of the Foreign Office for the Southeast. Tomasevich, The Chetniks, p. 320.

[36]Jukich, p. 107.

[37]Milazzo, p. 31; Jukich, p. 107. German situation reports of the time estimated the number of casualties in the massacre at Kragujevac to be 2,300 victims. More recent studies indicate that the figure of 7,000 casualties is far more realistic. Ladislas Hory and Martin Brozat, Der Kroatische Ustasha Staat 1941-1945 (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1964), p. 118; Milazzo, p. 31.

[38]Tomasevich, "Yugoslavia during WW II", p. 370.

[39]Dedijer et al., History of Yugoslavia, p. 604.

[40]Dedijer, Tito Speaks, p. 164.

[41]Ibid., p. 160.

[42]Ibid., p. 164.

[43]Ibid., p. 166.

[44]Djonlagich et al., p. 69.

[45]Dedijer et al., History of Yugoslavia, p. 607. It is clear that both the 714th and 717th Infantry Divisions were involved in this operation but only in minor roles. Dedijer, Tito Speaks, p. 164.

[46]Ibid., p. 607.

[47]Otto Heilbrunn, Partisan Warfare (London: George Allen & Irwin Ltd., 1962), p. 164.

[48]Dedijer et al., History of Yugoslavia, p. 606; Auty, p. 232.

[49]Rich, p. 285; Tomasevich, The Chetniks, p. 98. Boehme's position was assumed by General Paul Bader who was the Commander of the LXV Army Corps. On February 2, 1942 Bader took on the office of Commanding General in Serbia. This office combined several positions including Boehme's former post of Plenipotentiary Commanding General in Serbia. Tomasevich, The Chetniks, p. 98.

[50]Roberts, p. 76.

[51]Milazzo, p. 41. This operation, called "Operation Mihailovich" by the Germans, was carried out on December 6th and 7th against Mihailovich's headquarters at Ravna Gora. The operation involved the German 342nd Infantry Division. The Germans captured 477 Chetniks without suffering any casualties themselves. Mihailovich himself narrowly escaped capture in this operation. Tomasevich, The Chetniks, p. 155, 199.

[52]Wolff, p. 210. This number reflects the number of Partisans in Yugoslavia, not the size of the force escorting the Partisan Supreme Command.

[53]Deakin, Embattled Mountain, p. 101.

[54]Ibid.

[55]Ibid.

[56]Auty, p. 237.

[57]Deakin, Embattled Mountain, p. 101; Auty, p. 237. Deakin contends that a brigade numbered between 800 and 1,000 men while a U.S. Army study states that the Proletarian brigades frequently contained only a few hundred men. U.S. Dept. of the Army, p. 31.

[58]U.S. Dept. of the Army, p. 21.

[59]Ibid., p. 25. The general term "insurgent" is used here since it is certain that both Partisans and Chetniks had gathered in the operation area and that both took part in the subsequent fighting against the Axis forces. Tomasevich, The Chetniks, p. 160.

[60]U.S. Dept. of the Army, p. 25; Fitzroy Maclean, The Heretic: The Life and Times of Josip Broz-Tito (New York: Harper and Brothers, Publishers, 1957), p. 132.

[61]Dedijer, Tito Speaks, p. 173.

[62]U.S. Dept. of the Army, p. 25.

[63]Djonlagich et al., p. 80; U.S. Dept. of the Army, p. 25. In an attempt to counteract the effects of deep snow the Germans deployed ski battalions during the operation. Maclean, p. 132; Dedijer et al., History of Yugoslavia, p. 616.

[64]Dedijer et al., History of Yugoslavia, p. 616.

[65]U.S. Dept. of the Army, p. 25.

[66]Ibid.

[67]Hory and Brozat, p. 122.

[68]Tomasevich, The Chetniks, p. 161. Kenneth Macksey states that this third operation was only a series of minor anti-guerrilla operations. However, evidence suggests that this operation was, in fact, a major anti-guerrilla operation. Kenneth Macksey, The Partisans of Europe in World War II (London: Hart-Davis, MacGibbon, 1975), p. 140; U.S. Dept. of the Army, p. 20.

[69]U.S. Dept. of the Army, p. 25-26.

[70]Dedijer et al., History of Yugoslavia, p. 618.

[71]Ibid., p. 619.

[72]Ibid.; U.S. Dept. of the Army, p. 26.

[73]Maclean, p. 146.

[74]Dedijer et al., History of Yugoslavia, p. 619.

[75]Ibid.; Macksey, p. 140.

[76]Dedijer, Tito Speaks, p. 182.

[77]Macksey, p. 140.

[78]KTB II/1, p. 139; Macksey, p. 141.

[79]Vladimir Dedijer, With Tito Through the War: Partisan War Diary 1941-44 (London: Alexander Hamilton, 1951), p. 314.

[80]Auty, p. 247. Auty states that Tito's reasons for moving into Croatia were fewer enemy forces in the area and the possibility that it could become an additional liberated area. A positive result of this march into Croatia, which Tito did not initially consider, was that it brought a sizeable number of Croats and Bosnians into the Partisan movement which, until that point, had been made up largely of Serbs in southern Yugoslavia and Slovenes in the north. Auty, p. 247, 237.

[81]Hory and Brozat, p. 128.

[82]KTB II/1, p. 139. Bihach was an important acquisition since it was a large town of some 12,000 to 15,000 inhabitants with commercial developments and trade and rail connections. Djilas, p. 208; Maclean, p. 157.

[83]Tomasevich, The Chetniks, p. 282. Another important event which took place in November was the formation of Partisan divisions and corps in the newly named "People's Liberation Army of Yugoslavia". On November 1, 1942 the 1st and 2nd Proletarian Divisions came into existence. The actual number of men in a Partisan division appears to be a subject of some dispute. Tito put the size of a division in 1942-1943 at 3,000 to 4,000 fighting men while Hermann Neubacher contended that Partisan divisions "could consist of a couple of hundred men and also a couple of thousand men." Josip Broz Tito, Selected Military Works (Belgrade: Vojnorzdavacki Zavod, 1966), p. 320; Neubacher, p. 177.

[84]Wolff, p. 210.

CHAPTER THREE

The Major German-led Anti-Guerrilla Operations of 1943

In late December 1942, the German High Command ordered the German military authorities in Yugoslavia to begin drafting plans for a fourth major anti-guerrilla operation to be launched in mid-January 1943. The operation, codenamed "Operation White" (Weiss), was originally organized in three stages known as "White I, II, and III".[1] "White I" called for select Axis and quisling forces to encircle and destroy Partisan units in their so-called "liberated territory" (north-west Croatia and Western Bosnia). Once this had been accomplished, "White II" would go into effect to mop up any Partisans who had escaped destruction in "White I".[2] "White III", which was to have been carried out by Italian units but was cancelled, involved the disarming of Chetnik detachments in the Independent State of Croatia.[3] The entire operation was expected to be in effect from January 20th to February 10th, but, in fact, it lasted until March 20th.[4]

The units designated to participate in "Operation White" were the 7th SS Prinz Eugen Division, the 717th and 718th Divisions, part of the 714th Division, the 369th Croatian Infantry Division, the German 187th Infantry Reserve Division (deployed in Croatia since December), the Italian Lombardia, Re, and Sassari Divisions, several Croatian brigades, and 6,000 Chetnik troops supporting the Italian forces.[5] During the course of the operation the Italian Bergamo, Marche, and Murge Divisions, together with a steadily increasing number of Chetnik troops, also saw action.[6] Altogether, some 65,000 Axis and quisling troops were involved in "Operation White".[7]

Most of the units initially taking part in the operation received orders on January 12th which designated their assembly areas and outlined their first objectives. The 7th SS Prinz Eugen Division was to quickly advance from Karlovac and block the Karlovac-Bihac road, in order to prevent an enemy breakout toward the west.[8] Elements of the 714th Division, together with the 369th Croatian Division, were instructed to proceed southwesterly through the Samarica region toward the line Slunj-Bihac, while barring any Partisan escape attempt in an easterly or northeasterly direction.[9] (See Map page 110.) The 717th Division was directed to push from Velagici, and repel any enemy withdrawal toward the south or southwest.[10] The Italian V Army Corps, consisting of the Lombardia, Re, and Sassari Divisions, was to enter the operation area from the line Knin-Ogulin, move to the line Bihac-Slunj, and form a defensive front along the line Dabar-Slunj to avert a Partisan breakthrough toward the south.[11]

After a five day delay caused by poor weather conditions, "White I" commenced on January 20th. According to a letter written by the Commander-in-Chief of German Forces in Croatia, General Lüters, the Partisans were taken by surprise by the Axis onslaught, since they had not expected a winter operation.[12] Aside from an undisclosed number of Partisan troops in the operation area, there were roughly 3,000 wounded scattered in field hospitals throughout the region.[13] The strong Partisan commitment to saving their wounded meant that the Supreme Command had no other alternative but to order the wounded to be escorted safely out of the operation area. It was from this point onward, writes Frederick Deakin, that "The shape of the battle ahead would now be conditioned, and at moments dictated, by the protection of the long

columns of the hospital."[14]

Despite the serious impediment which the Partisan wounded placed on their fellow troops, the Axis forces were unable to press their advantage. Part of the reason for this was the firm resistance of the Partisans, who also carried out widespread destruction of roads and bridges.[15] Yet responsibility must also rest with the Italian forces, who approached their operational tasks in an indifferent and slowfooted manner while placing Chetnik support units in the firing line.[16] As a result the Partisans were able to move south and southwest out of the operation area, a withdrawal that the Italian forces should have been in a position to block.[17]

Having successfully eluded the Axis encirclement attempt in the Bihac area, but with Axis and quisling troops in hot pursuit, the Partisans retreated southeasterly across the Bosnian uplands (a journey that took three weeks).[18] The Partisans planned to move into the Neretva valley; cross the Neretva river at its middlecourse; push through eastern Herzegovina, southern Bosnia, the Sandzak, and Montenegro; and move into the Kosovo region and Serbia, where they would build up their forces and begin the liberation of this area.[19] Recalling the Partisans' successful counteroffensive during the summer and fall of 1942, Tito shrewdly decided to turn the withdrawal into an offensive action. The Partisan offensive began on February 9th, and a series of towns were captured during the course of a few weeks, beginning with Prozor.[20] (See Map page 112.) Defended by the 259th Regiment of the Italian Murge Division, Prozor fell to the Partisan 3rd Division on February 17th, the second day of the Partisan assault upon it.[21] After the fall of Prozor the Partisans swept into the Neretva valley and within three days

according to Vladimir Dedijer, "the entire Murge Division was defeated, fifteen tanks were captured, (as well as) a great many guns, huge quantities of ammunition, food, and medical supplies."[22]

After capturing Prozor, Tito set his sights on Konjich, a town whose great value to the Partisans was that from it ran the only road into eastern Herzegovina.[23] On February 19th, a weak Partisan force made up of two battalions from the 1st Proletarian Division was repulsed in its attack on Konjich by a garrison of Italian and Chetnik troops.[24] Persistent attempts by the Partisans to seize Konjich between February 22nd and 26th were also thwarted, resulting in a calling off of the attack on March 1st.[25]

"White I" had meanwhile been concluded on February 15th, without, of course, having achieved its objectives. A revised "White II", scheduled to begin on February 25th after regrouping, called for Axis and quisling units to avert any Partisan crossing of the Neretva river, and to encircle and destroy them in the canyons of the Rama and Neretva rivers.[26] The operational directive for "White II" called for the 7th SS Prinz Eugen Division, the 369 Croatian Infantry Division, and parts of the 187th Reserve Division to march on Livno, while the 717th Division was to throw back any Partisan attack south toward Mostar.[27] The Italian forces had committed themselves to advancing eastward from Livno and the line Drnis-Vrlika, while seeking to link up with the 7th SS Prinz Eugen Division.[28] In the meantime, local Chetnik detachments, with the tacit approval of the German military authorities, carried out security duties in the area north of Knin to the hills of Bos. Grahovo, as well as along the roadways leading to Knin.[29]

As the Partisans battled to capture Konjich in the last days of

February, German units pressed ever closer to the towns of Prozor and Jablanica, where the bulk of the Partisan troops and wounded were located. In this increasingly desperate situation Milovan Djilas, a member of the Partisan Supreme Command, contends that Tito became convinced that Konjich would be captured and made a still controversial decision to blow up the bridge over the Neretva river at Jablanica.[30] Tito apparently believed that such an act would not only prevent any Chetnik forces from crossing the river to attack the Partisans, but that it would also confuse the enemy into thinking the Partisans no longer intended to withdraw east across the Neretva.[31] The bridge was blown up on either February 28th or March 1st, and, between March 1st and 3rd, four other bridges across the Neretva river from Ostrozac to Kasula (30 kilometers further downstream) were detonated in compliance with new orders from Tito.[32]

In a meeting of the Partisan Supreme Command at Prozor on March 2nd, Tito expounded on a scheme to escape entrapment in the constricting Axis ring.

> First destroy (the) Neretva bridges, withdrawing the Second Proletarian Brigade from (the) left bank to lead the enemy to believe we have changed (the) direction of (our) advance, then break up German units to (the) north of Prozor, to lessen pressure on wounded, and then swiftly switch all forces into (the) Neretva valley, force the river, break through the Chetnik front, and get the wounded out that way.33

The Partisan assault against the German units north of Prozor commenced on March 3rd, when the 1st and 2nd Proletarian Divisions, together with the 7th Shock Division, thrust against the 717th Division, parts of the 718th Division, and two Croatian brigades.[34] In the ensuing three day battle the Partisan units, employing fifteen tanks and artillery seized from the Italians, succeeded in pushing back the German and Croatian

forces past Gornji Vakuf, a distance of some 25 to 30 kilometers.[35]

While this struggle went on, other Partisan troops worked feverishly to transport the remaining sick and wounded from Prozor to Jablanica, where the river crossing was to be made. Fortunately for the Partisans, the bridge at Jablanica had only been partially destroyed and, with minor alterations, could be used for crossing the Neretva. As a precondition to making the damaged bridge passable, the Partisans, on the night of March 6th, organized a small force to secure a bridgehead on the opposite bank. Vladimir Dedijer's description of this event reveals how unprepared the Chetniks were for an enemy assault across the Neretva.

> A group of Dalmation Partisans carrying live bombs in their teeth crept over a destroyed railway bridge which was standing practically erect. When they reached the other side of the bridge, where a Chetnik pillbox was located, they threw two bombs into it and then jumped in. Thus a bridgehead was established after a struggle which lasted only three minutes.36

On the next day, March 7th, Partisan engineers constructed a wooden walkway over the remains of the bridge, which Dedijer described in the following manner.

> It is nothing but a basket-work affair: Weaving through the confusion of the destroyed railway bridge, among the overturned tracks, is a bridge of narrow planking. 25,000 soldiers and wounded men have to cross it. But the approach is terrible. Even a man in the pink of health would feel dizzy, let alone a wounded man.37

With the 1st Proletarian Division fighting a stubborn rear-guard action against the 717th Division's renewed advance toward Prozor, Partisan troops and wounded began the passage across the makeshift walkway on the night of March 8th. It took nearly a week for all the Partisans to make the arduous crossing, a difficulty compounded by

frequent strafings from German and Italian aircraft.[38] In the meantime, German units continued to push toward Jablanica. The 717th Division captured Prozor without a fight on March 11th, and by March 14th the Supreme Commander Southeast reported that enemy resistance had essentially collapsed.[39] Yet when the 717th Division finally reached Jablanica on March 17th, they found no trace of the Partisans. Three days later "Operation White" was formally concluded.

During the final days of "Operation White" the first of three controversial meetings took place between highranking German and Partisan officials. Although described by the Partisans as discussions over prisoner exchanges, these meetings soon took on the appearance of armistice talks. The Partisan representatives, with Tito's knowledge and approval, named the Chetniks as their main adversary and asked the Germans for an armistice so they could devote themselves to destroying the Chetniks. These representatives also stated their fierce determination to fight the British if they attempted a landing along the Adriatic coast. However, in the end Hitler's repugnance for negotiating with the enemy ended such talks. A prisoner exchange was still concluded and more such exchanges gradually became more frequent.[40]

The Germans viewed "Operation White" as a relative success, despite its failure to achieve the basic goals of encircling and destroying Tito's main forces. It has resulted in enormous Partisan casualties with comparatively few suffered by the Germans.[41] In addition, it also forced the Partisans to seek sanctuary in the desolate region of Montenegro.[42]

The Germans used the months of April and May to redesignate and reorganize the four 700-level divisions. The refurbishing had been

requested on January 22, 1943 by the Supreme Commander Southeast, General Alexander Löhr. He declared that the divisions were battle-worthy, but that they were "not suited to the demands of formation and equipment."[43] Löhr appealed for "further outfitting with mountain clothing and equipment, and the redesignation of the units from infantry to light infantry (Jaeger) divisions."[44] On February 15th, the German High Command formally approved Löhr's requests, and on April 1st the 704th, 714th, 717th, and 718th Infantry Divisions were renamed, respectively, the 104th, 114th, 117th and 118th Light Infantry Divisions.

In addition to these modifications, the divisions underwent significant personnel changes. Each of them was provided with an additional 4,700 men designated as combat troops.[45] Most of this new manpower fell into three categories: men born in the year 1924, those born in 1905 or earlier, and men previously of reserve status.[46] An attempt was also made to assign men born before 1905 and sole surviving sons to supply functions, freeing younger supply troops for combat duty.[47] Yet despite all these measures to build up the former 700-level divisions, they did not attain the quality necessary for the rigours of anti-guerrilla warfare.

Early in the spring of 1943, while Partisan and Chetnik forces battled each other in Montenegro, German military planners were preparing "Operation Black" (Schwarz), the fifth major German-led anti-guerrilla operation. The chief purpose of the operation, according to German military records, was to eliminate the threat which enemy forces in Montenegro and Herzegovina posed to the valuable bauxite mines around Mostar and the mining region of southwest Serbia.[48] However, Jozo Tomasevich contends that this was not the real reason for launching

"Operation Black". He argues that the major purpose of the operation, like that of "Operation White", was to eliminate the potential threat that resistance groups might pose if the Western Allies decided to attempt an invasion of the Balkans.[49] Yet if the real purpose of "Operation Black" was glossed over by official German accounts, the results it was to achieve were tersely laid out in the operation orders. The orders stated that the basic goal of "Operation Black" was "the destruction of all insurgency existing in Montenegro and eastern Herzegovina without regard to their membership...".[50] It went on to stress that

> The German army must proceed ruthlessly and with brutal hardness against the population who shows itself unfriendly and must take every necessity of life from the enemy by the destruction of abandoned villages and existing provisions.51

German planners called for "Operation Black" to be carried out in three phases. During the first phase German and allied units were to surround enemy forces in Montenegro and the Sandzak and force them into an area of Montenegro bounded by the lines Savnik to Kolasin in the south, Pljevlja to the Piva river in the north, Pljevlja to Kolasin in the east, and Savnik to the Montenegro-Croatian border in the west.[52] (See Map page 113.) After mopping up the area which had already been crossed over, the Axis forces were to proceed into the second phase which called for them to disengage, regroup, and continue mopping up while forcing the enemy into the high plateau and mountains between the Piva and Tara rivers.[53] In the third and final phase of the operation the tightly encircled enemy forces were to be destroyed.[54] It was envisaged that the first and second phases of the operation would require ten days each to complete while the third phase was expected to last

several weeks.[55]

The area in which "Operation Black" was to take place was bounded by the main roads linking Kalinovik, Focha, and Plevja in the north, Plevja, Savnik, and Nikisch in the east, Nikisch and Bilecka in the south, and Bilecka, Gacko, and Kalinovik in the west. The choice of this region as the operation area was no accident. German military planners hoped to exhaust and demoralize the enemy in an area best described by Fitzroy Maclean.

> There can be few wilder or more inhospitable regions upon earth than this great tangle of mountains, forests, and rock-strewn uplands, broken at random by sheer precipices of limestone falling sharply away to the beds of swirling torrents three or four thousand feet below. There are no roads. Picking his way along narrow goat tracks, up and down mountain sides, across great wastes of crag and rock, along the strong beds of rivers and through vast forests where the trunks of huge trees lie rotting where they have fallen, the traveller may walk all day without coming on a single human habitation or indeed any sign of life.56

Events were to show that the ruggedness of this region did pose difficulties for Partisan troops during "Operation Black". Tito attested to this when he stated after the operation

> In Montenegro difficulties of terrain and natural obstacles proved to be a minor disadvantage to us, and an advantage to the enemy. These natural obstacles greatly impeded the manoeuvres of our units and jeopardized the whole success of our plan to break through the enemy's encirclement.57

The responsibility for "Operation Black" fell to the Commander-in-Chief of the German forces in Croatia, General Lüters. Deployed under his command for the duration of the operation were the 7th SS Prinz Eugen Division, the German 1st Mountain Division, (transferred to Serbia from the Eastern Front), the 118th and part of the 104th Light Infantry Divisions, the 4th Regiment of the Brandenburg Division (a

special force run by the German Abwehr), the 369th Croatian Infantry Division, the 4th Croatian Light Infantry Brigade (together with several other such brigades), the 61st Bulgarian Infantry Regiment, and the Italian Venezia, Ferrara, and Taurinense Divisions.[58] Not all of these units, most notably the majority of the Italian units, were involved in "Operation Black" at its outset. In fact, the operation orders set out the assembly areas and initial tasks for German or German-led units only. These called for the 7th SS Prinz Eugen Division to advance in a northwesterly direction from the line Mostar-Dreznica and take control of the area around Savnik.[59] Moving south from the line Konjich-Tarcin-Trnovo (22 kilometers south of Sarajevo), the 118th Division, together with the subordinated 4th Croatian Light Infantry Brigade, were to take Kalinovik and prevent any enemy breakouts toward the northwest.[60] The 369th Croatian Infantry Division was to hold the line Goranzde-Visegrad and repel any enemy escape attempts in a northerly direction.[61] Advancing from the east would be the 1st Mountain Division and Battlegroup of the 104th Division (comprised of the reinforced 724th Regiment and part of the Bulgarian 24th Infantry Division). The 1st Mountain Division, together with the subordinated 4th Brandenburg Regiment, was to proceed from the line Novi Pazar to Kos. Mitrovica and push westward to block the line Polja-Lipovo (10 kilometers northwest of Kolasin), while Battlegroup 104th Division was to hold the line Bistrica-Prijepolje-Brodarevo and hold back any enemy thrust into Serbia.[62] The operation orders appear to have left the small remaining gaps in this slowly developing encirclement ring to be plugged by allied or quisling units once "Operation Black" had begun.

After German and German-led units had secretly gathered in their

assembly areas, together with the Italian Taurinense Division which was to block Plevlja from the south, "Operation Black" was launched on May 15th.[63] Partisan and Chetnik forces alike were taken by complete surprise. In Montenegro, where the Germans calculated there were some 12,000 Chetniks, they succeeded in capturing the regional Chetnik Commander, Major Djurisic, and 4,000 of his troops during the course of the month-long operation.[64] Mihailovich himself narrowly escaped from being taken prisoner and fled into Serbia, where he remained until September 1944.[65] On the other hand, the Partisan forces in Montenegro, which consisted of Tito and the Supreme Staff, about 16,000 troops and roughly 4,000 wounded and typhus cases, were caught in the slowly constricting Axis encirclement ring.[66] It was again the Partisans, not the Chetniks, who had emerged as the focal point of a major German-led anti-guerrilla operation.

As "Operation Black" began to unfold, the enemy became aware of some significant changes that had been made in German anti-guerrilla strategy and tactics. One of the most important of these changes was the fullscale harnessing of the population by German troops in the operation area for the purpose of assisting in the destruction of the Partisans and Chetniks. The Germans ensured that the populace could provide no meaningful aid to the enemy by making use of all able-bodied men (and all means of transport) to carry the loads of troops and by forcing the population to give up their food stocks.[67] Another major alteration in German anti-guerrilla tactics was that German forces no longer advanced along major transportation routes, but instead marched along less travelled tracks preceded by small, specially-trained units called "Ranger Detachments" (Jagdkommandos).[68] However, the major routes were still used for the rapid deployment of mechanized and armoured

forces.[69]

Less significant, but nevertheless noteworthy tactical changes were revealed in the diary entry of Vladimir Dedijer on May 24, 1943.

> They (the Germans) are employing new tactics ... splitting into smaller groups, getting at us from the rear, sending trained dogs in to discover our positions, taking possession of any outstanding point, digging in at once, preparing ambushes....70

Dedijer also emphasized the crucial role which Axis air power once again played in a major German-led anti-guerrilla operation when he wrote, "The German air attack troubled us the most, and their anti-personnel bombs and constant strafing caused us heavy losses."[71]

Despite having been surprised by the sudden attack of a numerically superior enemy displaying more effective tactics, the Partisans recovered quickly. During the initial days of "Operation Black" Tito began to withdraw his forces into central Montenegro, from where he intended to push eastward, crack the developing Axis encirclement ring, and move toward southern Serbia.[72] However, Tito's plan was quashed due to the rapid advance of the 1st Mountain Division from the east. A second scheme of escape was devised whereby the Partisans would launch a strong assault toward the northwest with the intention of reaching Focha and withdrawing across the Drina River.[73] This plan was put into effect likely on May 22nd, and the attack continued for several days until Partisan forces were repulsed near Focha by troops from the 118th Light Infantry Division, whose battle-headquarters was situated at Focha.[74] Tito's third and final plan for eluding the Axis entrapment was to force a breakout from near Zabljak toward the northwest that would take his troops across the Piva river, through the valley of the Sutjeska, over the Zelen Gora mountain range and into northeast Bosnia.[75]

As the Partisans began to enact this plan during the last days of May, the Axis forces and their quisling supporters were already in the process of further constricting the encirclement ring in accordance with an order issued by General Lüters on May 25th. This order directed the 118th Light Infantry Division to attain and block the line from the Piva sector to Celibici, with the 369th Croatian Infantry Division holding the line Gradac-Pauce (6 kilometers southwest of Pljevlja).[76] Pushing from the east were the Italian Taurinense Division, which was to barricade the roads in the area from Pauce to Bitine (17 kilometers southwest of Pljevlja); Battlegroup von Ludwiger, which was to bar the line from Bitine to a position in the Tara valley; and the 1st Mountain Division, which was to hold the line Tara valley-Luke.[77] From the southwest marched the 7th SS Prinz Eugen Division with the 1st Mountain Division, while from the south came the Italian XIV Army Corps which had orders to advance and block the line G. Morakovo-Nikisch.[78]

On May 29th, as the Axis encirclement was drawing ever more tightly around the Partisans, the bulk of Tito's forces succeeded in forcing a crossing of the Piva river near Mratinje and continued moving in a northwesterly direction.[79] German military planners has originally hoped to contain the enemy in the rugged region between the Piva and Tara rivers, but they no doubt reassured themselves that the Partisans were still caught in a closely linked ring of enclosure. Unfortunately for the Axis, this was not the case.

The 118th Light Infantry Division reported on June 1st that a breach existed in its sector of the encirclement ring between the towns of Suha and Tjentiste (on the Sutjeska river), a gap which was directly in the path of the withdrawing Partisan forces.[80] To avert a Partisan

breakout in this breach, the Divisional Commander, Major General Joseph Kübler, issued an order on June 1st which stated

> Reinforced 118th Light Infantry Division is first of all to close the gap between Suha and Tjentiste by attacks from the south and north in order, with a strong right wing, to subsequently throw the enemy back across the Sutjeska to the Piva sector of Mratinje-D. Kureso. 81

On the same day Kübler also directed that the Second Battalion of the 734th Regiment and the First and Third Battalion of the 738th Regiment be formed into an attack force north of Tjentiste.[82] The German discovery and response to the gap in the encirclement ring was made none too soon since on the very next day, June 2nd, Partisan forces began to launch a series of stubborn attacks to force a largescale break through in the Tjentiste-Suha sector.[83]

On June 3rd, as the Partisans were battling to force a passage over the Sutjeska river, the dire circumstances forced Tito to make a harsh choice. He decided that the more seriously wounded were to be concealed in caves and undergrowth in the Piva region, the lightly wounded were to be kept with the main Partisan force, while the remaining wounded were to be escorted by the 3rd Proletarian Division to the south-east, where they were to attempt a breakout into the Sandzak region. Greatly impeded by their charges, the 3rd Division, and the 7th Proletarian Division protecting the lightly wounded, were almost completely destroyed in the course of "Operation Black".[84]

Bitter dawn-to-dusk fighting lasted nearly a week between Partisan troops and the 118th Division as Axis forces closed in for the kill in the Tjentiste-Suha region. The 118th Division suffered high casualties, with 33 dead and 121 wounded in the first four days of June as compared with 58 dead and 257 wounded in the period from May 15th to May 31st.[85]

Then, between June 5th and 8th, the Partisan Supreme Command, along with the 1st, 2nd, and 7th Proletarian Divisions (the 7th Proletarian Division was escorting some 600 lightly wounded and sick Partisans) forced a passage through the encirclement ring in the Tjentiste-Suha gap.[86] These units had barely made their way through the gap when it was plugged sometime on June 9th or 10th, ensnaring the 3rd Proletarian Division and an undisclosed number of other Partisan troops in a now tightly sealed encirclement ring.[87]

The Germans were determined to halt the withdrawal of Tito's main force from the operation area. Following the break through of the Partisans in the Tjentiste-Suha sector, part of the 369th Croatian Infantry Division, along with elements of the 724th Light Infantry Regiment, were ordered to block the Focha-Kalinovik road and prevent the approaching Partisans from crossing.[88] This small force was plainly unequal to the task and on June 13th the 369th Division had to report that the enemy could not be held back and had succeeded in crossing the road east of the town of Jelec.[89] Once across the Focha-Kalinovik road, Tito's forces broke up into smaller groups and moved in a northwesterly direction, ultimately reassembling southwest of Zvornik.[90]

As Tito's main Partisan group was forcing a break through at Jelec, the final mopping up of remnant Partisan troops was being performed by the 1st Mountain Division and the 7th SS Prinz Eugen Division.[91] By the time "Operation Black" was essentially concluded on June 15th, the Germans could truthfully claim that only scattered and isolated Partisans remained in the operation area.[92]

While being better planned and implemented than previous major anti-guerrilla operations, "Operation Black" still had only limited

success. The operation had clearly accomplished its official purpose by forcing Chetnik and Partisan forces out of Montenegro and southern Herzegovina, where they had posed a threat to valuable mining areas. It had also inflicted horrendous losses on the Partisans who, according to a German count, left behind 5,697 dead comrades in the operation area.[93] German casualties during "Operation Black", though almost insignificant when compared with those of the Partisans, were larger than in past operations, with 323 dead, 1,696 wounded, and 217 missing.[94] Yet the possibility of an Allied invasion of the Balkans along the Adriatic coast meant that the Axis rear was still vulnerable to attacks from Yugoslav insurgents.

The conclusion of "Operation Black" marked the close of a phase in German anti-guerrilla operations. One indication of this was the dispersal of the four light infantry divisions which had been stationed together in Yugoslavia since June 1941. In late April 1943, even before "Operation Black" had begun, the 117th Division was transferred to Greece, where it was joined in June by the 104th Division.[95] More significantly, "Operation Black" was to be the last major German-led anti-guerrilla operation in which Italian forces would participate. On September 8, 1943, less than three months after "Operation Black", Italy surrendered unconditionally to the Allies. While the Italian forces in Yugoslavia had been particularly unreliable and ineffective in largescale anti-guerrilla operations, they had also provided some semblance of security in parts of Slovenia, Dalmatia, and Montenegro. Upon the Italian capitulation, the fourteen Italian divisions in Yugoslavia simply collapsed, forcing the Germans to commit more of their troops for security duty.[96]

The Italian surrender had come as no real surprise to the German

High Command, which had been anticipating such an event since early July. In preparation for this possibility, it set about reorganizing the Southeast Command. On July 26th, Hitler ordered the Supreme Commander Southeast, General Löhr, to be replaced by Field Marshal Maximilian Freiherr von Weichs, the former commander of Army Group B in southern Russia.[97] Then on August 8th, the Southeast Command, designated as "Army Group (Heeresgruppe) Command E" since December 8, 1942, was renamed "Army Group Command F", and placed under the authority of Field Marshal von Weichs.[98] Army Group Command E, under the direction of General Löhr, was now to serve as the command staff for the forces deployed in the southern Balkans and Greece.[99]

Another indication of the German concern with their Southeastern theater was the arrival of more German or German-led units. From April to July 1943, there arrived in Yugoslavia three German divisions (the 100th Light Infantry Division, the 173rd Reserve Division, and the 297th Infantry Division) as well as the German-led 373rd Croatian Infantry Division.[100] In early August the staff of the 2nd Tank Army, under the command of General Lothar Rendulic, was transferred to Serbia from the Eastern front.[101] Rendulic, a Croat who had been a former Austrian army officer, was given the authority over all German troops in the Independent State of Croatia. Following the Italian capitulation, a number of additional German units arrived in Yugoslavia, though most saw only short-term duty of a month or two.[102] The units which arrived at this time and remained into 1944 were the German 181st and 264th Infantry Divisions (the former sent from Norway and the latter a newly-formed unit) and the 1st Cossack Division, a force of fervently anti-Communist Russians.[103] By the end of 1943, some thirteen German or German-led

divisions were stationed in Yugoslavia.

While the Italian surrender created serious security problems for the Germans, it greatly benefited the Partisans. They gained control of a large section of former Italian occupation territory; seized the weapons, munitions, and stores of nearly eleven Italian divisions; and some 4,000 Italian soldiers from the Isonzo, Bergamo, and Zara Divisions joined up with either the Partisans or the Chetniks.[104] Yet for the Chetniks, aside from having some Italians enter their ranks, the Italian surrender could only be seen as a disaster. It removed the only reasonably substantial supporter the Chetniks had had in Yugoslavia at the very time when British disenchantment with the Chetniks was steadily increasing. In essence, the Chetnik movement was finished as a viable military organization, except, to some extent, in Serbia.[105]

During the late fall of 1943, German military authorities began receiving reports of strong Partisan forces gathering in the area north of Sarajevo. By mid-November the Germans became convinced that the Partisans were on the verge of launching an armed assault into Serbia.[106] To halt this advance and destroy the concentrated Partisan forces, the Germans began to devise a sixth major anti-guerrilla operation.[107] General Rendulic estimated there were some 30,000 Partisans collected in the Korun and Javorplanina regions (about 40 to 50 kilometers north of Sarajevo).[108] He called for the encirclement and annihilation of this Partisan group, beginning with quick thrusts by German and quisling units from the northwest and south, while the 1st Mountain Division (aided by police and security forces) would form a blocking line along the Drina river to throw back any Partisan withdrawal attempt to the east.[109] This operation called "Operation Fireball", was to be carried out by the 1st Mountain Division, the 7th SS Prinz Eugen Division, parts of the

369th Croatian Infantry Division, elements of the 187th Reserve Division, several smaller quisling units, the 24th Bulgarian Division (sent from Serbia), and a few Chetnik divisions from the Sandzak.[110] By the end of November these units had assembled around the Korun and Javorplanina regions and, after a brief reprieve due to poor road conditions, "Operation Fireball" began on December 2nd.[111]

German and quisling troops were hampered from the start by the vastness of the area to be combed, the harshness of the terrain, and the bad weather conditions.[112] They were also facing an adversary who had become proficient at eluding entrapment, and was now no longer encumbered by large numbers of wounded comrades.[113] The Partisan group initially attempted to withdraw toward the east, but discovered this route was barred by the 1st Mountain Division. They then turned around and began moving in a northwesterly direction. Rendulic describes the Partisans' tactical skill during the course of their withdrawal toward the northwest.

> ... Although we intercepted their orders, it was not easy to take countermeasures and prevent breakthrough attempts, since they knew how to appear with surprising quickness. However, they also understood exactly how to break off the battle and vanish just as quickly again.114

On December 11th, after "Operation Fireball" had already been in effect for over a week, the Southeast Command reported that, contrary to expectations, the German units had still not engaged in any serious fighting with the Partisans.[115] This, in turn, led to concern as to whether the Partisans were preparing for a last ditch stand in the middle of the encirclement ring, or if German intelligence reports were correct about strong enemy forces being trapped in the ring.[116] By mid-December, when the constriction of the circle gave Rendulic cause to believe the

decisive moment had arrived, German units advancing from the north stumbled into a dense, pathless forest. A decision was made to cut paths through the forest the next day (most likely December 16th or 17th), and recreate a continuous front.[117] That night, however, most of the Partisans escaped through a particularly inaccessible part of the forest, and moved northwesterly out of the encirclement ring.[118] Small groups of Partisans also succeeded in filtering through the ring in other directions.[119] On December 18th, when "Operation Fireball" was finally called off, only remnants of Partisan units remained in the operation area. Despite the limited amount of fighting which occurred in the operation, the Partisans had suffered nearly 9,000 casualties.[120]

On the same day "Operation Fireball" ended, "Operation Snowstorm" began. In it were involved all the units which had taken part in the previous operation, except for the 24th Bulgarian Division, which returned to security duty in Serbia.[121] The purpose of "Operation Snowstorm" was to pursue and encircle the Partisan group which had escaped destruction in "Operation Fireball" and had continued moving towards the northwest.[122] However, nothing much came of this operation since the Germans, in attempting to halt the Partisans, encountered stiffening resistance and partial counterattacks.[123] On December 31st, the operation was terminated with the Germans being able to claim an additional 2,000 Partisan casualties.[124]

The three major German-led anti-guerrilla operations of 1943 had brought together the largest concentration of Axis and quisling units ever assembled in Yugoslavia. In the course of these operations the Partisans sustained horrendous losses and, yet, the Partisan movement flourished. Much of the Partisan success in this regard was due to the

tireless efforts by its Communist leadership to gain the trust and support of all Yugoslavs, something the Germans made little or no effort to do. By the end of 1943, the German hold on Yugoslavia was slowly slipping. Although they were to carry out further anti-guerrilla operations in 1944, the largescale encirclement operations were essentially abandoned for a few more innovative, but equally unsuccessful, operations.

NOTES FOR CHAPTER THREE

[1]Unfortunately, primary source material dealing with "Operation White" is somewhat scarce. Only in the divisional records of the 714th Division can even the slightest mention of the operation be found. For this reason, the analysis of "Operation White" must be based, in part, on secondary source material.

[2]Dedijer et al., History of Yugoslavia, p. 632.

[3]Ibid. "White III" was cancelled on February 8th, after the Italian military authorities in Yugoslavia protested that it was unnecessary and politically dangerous. Tomasevich, The Chetniks, p. 237.

[4]114 I.Div. "Nachtrag zum Tätigkeitsbericht für Januar 1943 'Das Unternehmen Weiss'", January 19, 1943, T315/1294/11.

[5]Tomasevich, The Chetniks, p. 236; Hory and Brozat, p. 142. Although the German military authorities in Yugoslavia were plainly displeased by the Italian's deploying Chetnik troops, they seem to have tolerated the situation.

[6]Tomasevich, The Chetniks, p. 236, 240.

[7]Milazzo, p. 117.

[8]Bfh. d. Dt. Tr. i. I. "O. Befehl für das Unternehmen Weiss", January 12, 1943, T315/1294/98.

[9]Ibid., 99.

[10]Ibid.

[11]Ibid. Despite their initial involvement in "Operation White", neither the 718th Division nor the various Croatian brigades were mentioned in the orders outlining operational responsibilities. The 718th Division, with its headquarters at Sarajevo, was expected to throw back any Partisan surge toward the east, while the several Croatian brigades were to gather at Prijedor and then march south. Hory and Brozat, p. 142; Schraml, p. 132.

[12]Schraml, p. 138. Tito, however, contends that Partisan Supreme Headquarters received information prior to the beginning of "Operation White" which indicated the Germans were preparing a major anti-guerrilla operation. Tito, p. 132.

[13]Deakin, Embattled Mountain, p. 42. The protection of and sacrifice for wounded comrades was a principle deeply ingrained in the Yugoslav people. The origins of this principle go back to the wars fought between the Montenegrins and the Turks during the 19th century. This deep concern for the wounded was intensified by the Partisans from the fall of 1941 onward. As a result, numerous, often ingeniously

concealed, Partisan field hospitals were eventually established in every region of Yugoslavia. Deakin, Embattled Mountain, p. 38.

[14]Ibid., p. 41.

[15]Tomasevich, The Chetniks, p. 237; Djilas, p. 216.

[16]Milazzo, p. 117.

[17]Dedijer et al., History of Yugoslavia, p. 633; Maclean, p. 170. "White I" was in trouble from the very beginning as the main Partisan force, consisting of five divisions, was already outside the operation area. As soon as Tito realized another major anti-guerrilla operation was in progress, he ordered these units to move in a southeasterly direction and clear a path for the other Partisan units seeking to evade encirclement. Tomasevich, The Chetniks, p. 237.

[18]Auty, p. 254.

[19]Tomasevich, The Chetniks, p. 239.

[20]The towns which were captured by the Partisans during late February and early March were Ostrozac, Ivan Sedlo, Imotski, Posusje, Jablanica, and Dreznica. Dedijer et al., History of Yugoslavia, p. 635.

[21]Djilas, p. 220; Dedijer, Tito Speaks, p. 190. Djilas claims that upon the fall of Prozor, the entire Third Battalion of the 259th Regiment was executed, with only drivers being spared to help move munitions and Partisan wounded. Djilas, p. 220.

[22]Dedijer, Tito Speaks, p. 190.

[23]Tomasevich, The Chetniks, p. 239.

[24]Ibid. The Konjich garrison was reinforced during the course of the ten day attack by some German and Croatian troops, together with more Chetniks. Tomasevich, The Chetniks, p. 239.

[25]Tomasevich, The Chetniks, p. 239; KTB III/1/178. On February 22nd, the 2nd Proletarian Division captured Jablanica, an acquisition of vital importance to the Partisans in mid-March. Auty, p. 255.

[26]Tomasevich, The Chetniks, p. 237.

[27]KTB III/1/118. The 714th Division, reinforced by elements of the 187th Reserve Division and Croatian units, was to remain in the "White I" operation area and make sure the Partisans did not try to rebuild themselves there.

[28]Ibid. High level discussions held in Rome between the German and Italian military during the last week of February 1943, resulted in Italian assurances of a greater effort in "White II", as well as a promise to disarm all Chetniks in the Independent State of Croatia once the Partisans had been finished off in "Operation White". The Italians also guaranteed to do the same in Montenegro, at a date to be named later.

However, immediately after the German military representatives had left Rome, the Italians decided to stall indefinitely any attempts to disarm the Chetniks in the Independent State of Croatia, and declared any such action in Montenegro to be impossible. Tomasevich, The Chetniks, p. 237, 239.

[29]By the end of February, some 12,000 to 15,000 Chetniks had assembled along the Neretva river from Konjich to Mostar and around the towns of Kalinovik and Nevesinje. Although their participation in "Operation White" was still uneasily tolerated by the Germans, the Chetniks feared the Germans might cross the Neretva and move into the Chetnik domain of eastern Herzegovina. In an effort to calm these fears, Major Jevdjevich, the Bosnian Chetnik Commander, made an agreement with the Germans on February 23, 1943, in which the Germans promised not to cross the Neretva and both sides agreed to avoid any contact with each other. The fact that this agreement was upheld by the Germans, according to Jozo Tomasevich, had far more to do with their need to preserve good relations with their Italian allies and protect the bauxite mines around Mostar, than it did with keeping their promise to Jevdjevich. Ibid., p. 240, 241.

[30]Djilas, p. 224.

[31]Tomasevich, The Chetniks, p. 242.

[32]Ibid. Partisan historians hail Tito's order to destroy the bridges across the Neretva as brilliant strategy, yet several former highranking Partisan officers have since expressed serious doubts as to the basic soundness of the scheme. Djilas believes the action did not fool the Germans for an instant, since crossing the Neretva was the only way out of the Axis encirclement ring. No available German sources even mention the blowing up of the bridges, so it is impossible to discern whether they were, in fact, deceived by the event or not. Djilas, p. 224; Tomasevich, The Chetniks, p. 242.

[33]Dedijer, With Tito, p. 326.

[34]Tomasevich, The Chetniks, p. 242.

[35]Dedijer, Tito Speaks, p. 292; Tomasevich, The Chetniks, p. 242. No German source makes even the slightest allusion to this German setback.

[36]Dedijer, Tito Speaks, p. 292. In the course of the next few days, this bridgehead was steadily expanded by three Dalmatian and three Serbian battalions. Dedijer et al., History of Yugoslavia, p. 638.

[37]Dedijer, With Tito, p. 287.

[38]Tomasevich, The Chetniks, p. 243.

[39]KTB III/I/203,214.

[40]Oberst von Horstenau "Aktenvermerk über Ferngespräch mit Oberst Pfafferot am 11.3.1943", March 11, 1943, T501/267/528: Roberts, p. 107-109.

[41]According to a report by General Lüters dated March 31, 1943, German and Croatian units killed some 11,915 Partisans, with 616 more being executed after capture and another 2,506 being taken prisoner. There are no final tallies of German casualties suffered in "Operation White", although up to February 15th German units had sustained 335 dead and 101 missing. Tomasevich, The Chetniks, p. 243; KTB III/1/142.

[42]U.S. Dept. of the Army, p. 37.

[43]KTB III/I/65. General Löhr, an Austrian who had been head of the Austrian Airforce until 1938 and served as Chief of Airfleet 4 until August 1942, was appointed Armed Forces Commander Southeast on August 8, 1942.

[44]Ibid. The first German light infantry divisions were created in 1937-38 as mobile, partially mechanized units. The name was again used in late 1940 when several divisions were formed with elements of both infantry and mountain divisions. When the 700-level divisions in Yugoslavia were redesignated as light divisions, they were organized along the lines of a mountain division but with more motorized transport for deployment on flatter terrain. Davies, p. 42, 44.; U.S. Dept. of the Army, p. 37.

[45]O. B. Heeresgr. E an Komm. Gen. u. Bef. i. Serbien "Ausbau der 704., 714., 717., und 718. I.D. zu Jaeger-Divisionen", March 20, 1943, T315/243/289. In the case of the 114th Light Infantry Division, for example, the total strength of the unit increased from 4,655 troops on January 1, 1943 to 9,250 troops by April 21st. The battle strength of the division increased in the same period from 3,165 men to 6,056 men. 714 I.D. "Gefechts-und Verpflegungsstärken 714. I.D.", January 1, 1943, T315/1294/84; 114. Jaeger Div. "Gefechts-und Verpflegungsstärken 114. Jaeger Div.", April 21, 1943, T315/1294/456.

[46]O. B. Heeresgr. E an Komm. Gen. u. Bef. i. Serbien "Ausbau der 704., 714., 717., u. 718. I.D. zu Jaeger Divisionen", March 30, 1943, T315/1243/289.

[47]Ibid.

[48]Bfh.d.dt.Tr.i.Kr. an 118 J. Div. "O. Befehl für Fall Schwarz", May 6, 1943, T315/1301/561.

[49]Tomasevich, The Chetniks, p. 252.

[50]O. B. Heeresgr. E. "O. Befehl f. Operation Schwarz", May 5, 1943, T501/250/289. These operation orders are further evidence of the long-standing and exaggerated concern which the German High Command had with the Chetniks. The orders stressed that "in particular the Mihailovich staff with all his aides and liaison officers must be hunted down and destroyed." Bfh.d.dt.Tr.i.Kr. an 118 J.Div. "O. Befehl f. Fall Schwarz", May 6, 1943, T315/1301/561.

[51]O. B. Heeresgr. E "O. Befehl f. Operation Schwarz", May 5, 1943, T501/250/278.

[52]Bfh.d.dt.Tr.i.Kr. an 118 J.Div. "O. Befehl f. Fall Schwarz", May 6, 1943, T315/1301/561.

[53, 54, 55]Bfh.d.dt.Tr.i.Kr. an 118 J.Div. "O. Befehl f. Fall Schwarz", May 6, 1943, T315/1301/562; Tomasevich, The Chetniks, p. 252.

[56]Maclean, p. 180.

[57]Stephen Clissford, Whirlwind: An Account of Marshall Tito's Rise to Power (London: Cresset Press, 1949), p. 150.

[58]Tomasevich, The Chetniks, p. 251-252; 118 J. Div. "Div.Bef. Nr. 3", May 25, 1943, T315/1301/870. Tomasevich estimates that 117,000 Axis and quisling troops took part in "Operation Black". Tomasevich, "Yugoslavia during WW II", p. 101.

[59]O. B. Heeresgr. E "O. Befehl f. Operation Schwarz", May 5, 1943, T501/250/290; Bfh.d.dt.Tr.i.Kr. an 118 J.Div. "O. Befehl f. Fall Schwarz", May 6, 1943, T315/1301/562.

[60]Ibid., 562-563.

[61]Ibid., 563.

[62]Ibid., 564.

[63]KTB III/I/p. 482. It is not clear just when the 61st Bulgarian Regiment or the Italian Ferrara or Venezia Divisions began to take part in "Operation Black". The Bulgarians were definitely involved by May 20th, since on that day they merged with the German 724th Regiment to form a unit designated as Battlegroup von Ludwiger. The Ferrara and Venezia Divisions were certainly involved in the operation by May 25th. 104 J. Div. "Führungsstab Kampfgr. v. Ludwiger", May 20, 1943, T315/1244/277; 118 J. Div. "O. Befehl f. Verengung des Einschliessungsringes", May 25, 1943, T315/1301/869.

[64]Komm. Gen. u. Bef. i. Serbien an 104 J. Div. "Lageber.f.Zeit 4.-16. Mai 1943", May 17, 1943, T315/1243/744; U.S. Dept. of the Army, p. 37.

[65]Roberts, p. 121.

[66]Dedijer et al., History of Yugoslavia, p. 641. German estimates of the total number of Partisans in the operation area were some 15,000 men. Bfh.d.dt.Tr.i.Kr. an 118 J.Div. "O. Befehl f. Fall Schwarz", May 6, 1943, T315/1301/561.

[67]O. B. Heeresgr. E "O. Befehl f. Fall Schwarz", May 6, 1943, T501/250/279. German units seem to have been provided with packmules to carry supplies through the mountainous operation area but many died due to exhaustion. 118 J.Div. an Bfh. "Tagesm. v. 15.5.1943", May 15, 1943, T315/1301/87.

[68]Maclean, p. 183. These ranger detachments were usually small

units of platoon or company strength made up of young, combat-tested troops. Due to their small size these units were able to pursue guerrillas into remote areas. While they seem to have been influential in smaller operations, they do not seem to have been used in numbers large enough to effect the results of largescale anti-guerrilla operations. While German military records indicate that there were ranger detachments involved in "Operation Black", there are no indications that their role had any measurable effect on the final outcome of the operation. U.S. Army, p. 48; C. Dixon and Otto Heilbrunn, Communist Guerrilla Warfare, (New York: Frederick Praeger, Publishers), p. 160.

[69]Ibid.

[70]Dedijer, With Tito, p. 319.

[71]Ibid., p. 324.

[72]Auty, p. 257.

[73]Clissford, p. 150.

[74]118 J.Div. an Bfh. "Tagesm. v. 22.5.1943", T315/1301/108; Clissford, p. 150.

[75]Clissford, p. 150.

[76]Bfh.d.dt.i.Kr., "Operationsplan f. die Vereng. d. Einschliess.", May 25, 1943, T315/1301/869.

[77]Ibid., 869-870. By May 30th Battlegroup von Ludwiger and the 1st Mountain Division were advancing still closer toward the Partisan rear up to the line Bitine-(7 kilometers southeast of Zabljak) Savnik. Tatigkeitsbericht der 104 J.Div., "Darstellung der Ereignisse", May 30, 1943, T315/1244/187.

[78]Ibid.

[79]118 J.Div. an Bfh., "Tagesm. v. 29.5.1943", May 29, 1943, T315/1301/146. When Major-General Kübler, Commander of the 118th Division, was asked by General Lüters why the division had not advanced up to the Piva river nor blocked it from the beginning, Kübler declared it had not been possible because of serious and growing supply problems with the entire 738th Regiment. 118 J.Div. an Bfh., "Tagesm. v.1.6.1943", June 1, 1943, T315/1301/162-163.

[80]118 J.Div. an Bfh. "Tagesm. v. 1.6.1943", June 1, 1943, T315/1301/160-161.

[81]118 J.Div., "Divisionsbefehl Nr. 11", June 1, 1943, T315/1302/12.

[82]118 J.Div. an Bfh., "Tagesm. v. 1.6.1943, June 1, 1943, T315/1301/160-162.

[83]118 J.Div. an Bfh., "Tagesm. v. 2.6.1943", June 2, 1943, T315/

1301/168.

[84]Deakin, Embattled Mountain, p. 48, 50.

[85]118 J.Div. and Bfh. "Verluste der 118 J.Div.", June 5, 1943, T315/1302/173.

[86]118 J.Div. an Bfh. "Tagesm. v. 2.6.1943", June 2, 1943, T315/1301/170.

[87]118 J.Div. an Bfh., "Tagesm. v. 10.6.1943", June 10, 1943, T315/1301/210. Unsuccessful breakout attempts by weak Partisan groups continued in the Tjentiste area until at least June 13th. KTB III/I/622.

[88]Schraml, p. 51; KTB III/I/622.

[89]118 J.Div. an. Bfh., "Tagesm. v. 13.6.1943", June 13, 1943, T315/1301/234; KTB III/I/642.

[90]Clissford, p. 153; Schraml, p. 51.

[91]British observer Frederick Deakin claims that out of 498 prisoners taken by the 1st Mountain Division during "Operation Black", 411 were shot. However, Deakin does not reveal where he obtained these figures, nor does any other scholar substantiate his statement. Deakin, Embattled Mountain, p. 31.

[92]118 J.Div. an Bfh. "Tagesm. v. 15.6.1943", June 15, 1943, T315/1301/248.

[93]Deakin, Embattled Mountain, p. 31.

[94]KTB III/I/638. The German 118th Division appears to have borne the brunt of Partisan attacks during "Operation Black". The division suffered 262 dead, 676 wounded, and 130 missing. 118 J.Div. "Erfahrungsbericht", June 16, 1943, T315/1302/424.

[95]Donlagich et al, p. 126. The German 1st Mountain Division was also dispatched to Greece in June 1943.

[96]Roberts, p. 145. By October 1943, six out of some thirteen German or German-led divisions had to be deployed as security forces for coastal defense. KTB III/II/1178.

[97]Rich, p. 286; U.S. Dept. of the Army, p. 42. On the same day, Hitler also called for the establishment of a new post, Military Commander Southeast (Militärbefehlshaber Südost), who would be responsible for overseeing the German military governments in Serbia and Greece; the German plenipotentiary in Croatia; and the territories of Greece, Montenegro, and Albania, occupied by the Italians. General Hans Gustav Felber was later appointed to this position. Rich, p. 286.

[98]On December 8, 1942, General Löhr's rank of Armed Forces Commander for the Southeast was raised to that of Supreme Commander Southeast, and

the German units in the Southeast theater redesignated as "Army Group E". The units deployed in Yugoslavia did not constitute an Army, however. There is speculation that the redesignation may have resulted from German desires to achieve the same ranking as the Italian forces in the region. U.S. Dept. of the Army, p. 35.

[99]Mueller-Hillebrand III, p. 119.

[100]The 100th Light Infantry Division and the 297th Infantry Division were newly-created divisions which bore the numbers of two German units which had perished at the Battle of Stalingrad.

[101]No tank divisions were involved in this transfer nor was the 2nd Tank Army to have any armoured divisions in Yugoslavia. Kiszling, p. 197; U.S. Dept. of the Army, p. 65.

[102]German units temporarily deployed in Yugoslavia were the 4th SS Panzer Grenadier Division "Netherland", the 11th SS Panzer Grenadier Division "Viking", the 44th Infantry Division, and the Armoured Divisions "Adolf Hitler" and "Hermann Goering". Les Systèmes D'Occupation En Yugoslavie 1941-1945 ed. Petar Brajovich et al., "Information on the People's Liberation War in Yugoslavia", p. 12-13.

[103]The 1st Cossack Division, later to become a corps, was commanded by Lieutenant-General Helmuth von Pannwitz, who was deeply sympathetic to the Cossack dreams of a Russia free from Communism.

[104]Schraml, p. 74; U.S. Dept. of the Army, p. 44.

[105]Milazzo, p. 162.

[106]Tomasevich, The Chetniks, p. 398.

[107]There is a great deal of discrepancy among scholars over what constitutes the sixth major German anti-guerrilla operation. Most of the differences stem from the fact that a series of anti-guerrilla operations was carried out between December 1943 and January 1944. For the purposes of this study, which is concerned with the period from 1941 to 1943, the two largescale anti-guerrilla operations carried out in December 1943 ("Operation Fireball" (Kugelblitz) and "Operation Snowstorm" (Schneesturm)) will be considered the components of what is broadly termed the sixth major anti-guerrilla operation.

[108]Rendulic, p. 197. Tito had his headquarters at Jajce and was, therefore, outside the zone of the forthcoming operation. Rendulic, p. 197.

[109]Schraml, p. 75.

[110]Tomasevich, The Chetniks, p. 398. The remaining light divisions in Yugoslavia, the 114th and 118th Divisions, were deployed in other anti-guerrilla operations during the latter part of December.

[111]There are few German military records which deal with operations "Fireball" or "Snowstorm", except for pre-operation directives. However, General Rendulic's memoirs, together with other secondary source material, shed at least some light on what transpired during these two

operations.

[112] KTB III/II/1372.

[113] In late 1943, the Americans and British airlifted some 4,000 Partisans out of Yugoslavia for medical attention. Foot, p. 197.

[114] Rendulic, p. 208.

[115] KTB III/II/1354.

[116] Ibid.

[117] Rendulic, p. 209.

[118] Ibid.

[119] Kiszling, p. 201.

[120] KTB III/II/1367.

[121] Tomasevich, The Chetniks, p. 398.

[122] Ibid.

[123] KTB III/II/1384. At the same time "Operation Snowstorm" was taking place, the German XVth Mountain Corps started a series of largescale anti-guerrilla operations against Partisan units in northern and western Bosnia, Dalmatia, and Croatia. Tomasevich, The Chetniks, p. 399.

[124] KTB III/II/1396.

CONCLUSION

Only one last major anti-guerrilla operation was launched in 1944, yet it was certainly the most imaginative of all. "Operation Knight's Move" (Rösselsprung) began at 7:00 a.m. on May 25, 1944, when a battalion of 650 German paratroopers and 40 gliders suddenly descended on Tito's headquarters at Drvar, while German and quisling ground support units moved in from Bihac, Banja Luka, and Livno.[1] A ferocious battle ensued in which the Partisans sustained some 6,000 casualties, with German losses being minute by comparison.[2] The German and quisling units also seized considerable war booty and nearly captured Tito, who escaped by clambering up the cliffs above his cave headquarters.[3] However, this was to be the last time the Germans were able to rally their forces for a largescale anti-guerrilla operation. By the late summer of 1944, their strained manpower reserves forced them increasingly on the defensive against the Partisans, who were now beginning to fight as regular army units.

> They now had many larger units equipped with either Western Allied or captured arms, and were able to call for Allied air support on high-priority basis and delivery of ammunitions by air from Allied bases.4

On September 22, 1944, the first units of the Soviet Union's Third Ukrainian Front entered northeastern Serbia, and by October 18th a combined Soviet and Yugoslav Partisan force had pressed the Germans into evacuating Belgrade.[5] The units of Army Groups E and F, together with large numbers of Chetniks, Serbian auxiliaries, Croatian soldiers, and individual civilian quislings, withdrew toward the northwest. Throughout the remainder of 1944 and early 1945, the Germans were able to maintain control over the main road and railway lines through the

Sandzak and Bosnia to Brod and Zagreb.[6] However, by the time the German Army surrendered on May 8, 1945, their units were fighting in the area south of Zagreb.[7]

The fate of those who commanded German forces in Yugoslavia, many of whom were former Austro-Hungarian officers, depended on who apprehended them. General Löhr and six other subordinate officers, most notably Major-General Josef Kübler (a former commander of the 118th Division), Major-General Fritz Neidholdt (Commander of the 369th Croatian (Legion) Division), Brigadeführer und General Major der Waffen SS August Schmidhuber (the commander of the 7th SS Prinz Eugen Division from January to May 1945) and Lieutenant General Johann Fortner (former Commander of the 118th Division) were captured by Yugoslav Partisans in May 1945. On February 6, 1947, a Yugoslav military court sent Löhr to the firing squad and his six subordinates were hanged.[8] Former Commanding General of German Forces in Croatia, General Rudolph Lüters, who had served briefly as Commander of the 15th Mountain Corps from August to October 1943 (before being retired in 1944), was taken prisoner by the Soviets and died while in their custody in 1945.

Those officers who fell into the hands of the Western Allies fared somewhat better. Field Marshal von Weichs was arrested after the war but released in November 1948 for health reasons. He died near Cologne on September 27, 1954. General von Glaise-Horstenau, who had served as Plenipotentiary General in Croatia until his retirement in August 1944, committed suicide on July 20, 1946, while in American custody. During the course of the Nuremburg trials, two former Armed Forces Commanders Southeast, Field Marshal Wilhelm List and General Walter Kuntze, were each sentenced to life imprisonment (List was freed on Christmas Day 1952);

General Lothar Rendulic received a twenty year sentence but was released at the end of 1952; and General Hubert Lanz, former Commander of the 1st Mountain Division, was given twelve years in prison.[9]

The inability of the Axis and quisling units in Yugoslavia to destroy insurgents in the six major anti-guerrilla operations from 1941 to 1943, and prevent the growth of insurrection generally, cannot be blamed on any one Axis or quisling participant. Nor should the Partisans receive too much credit for what transpired. The responsibility for the failure of these anti-guerrilla operations, and the eventual downfall of Axis and quisling-occupied Yugoslavia, must be shared by occupiers and insurgents alike.

The German Army made serious mistakes in their general response to mounting insurgency in Yugoslavia from 1941 to 1943. To begin with, the Germans imposed a harsh occupation system over much of Yugoslavia without providing the necessary manpower to support it.[10] No better example of German excessiveness exists than the extreme number of hostages executed in reprisal for every German soldier killed or wounded. Although intended to make the local population submissive and obedient, these reprisal measures only further inflamed the hatred of the Yugoslav people for their occupiers, and provided more recruits for the ranks of the Partisans. Certainly no occupation army can allow attacks on its troops to go unchallenged, but the Germans might have fared better had they been more just in their response to attacks on their troops, and if they had made some serious attempts to gain the trust and support of the largely peasant population of Yugoslavia. A second factor which acted against the containment of insurgency in Yugoslavia was the stubborn insistence of the German High Command to continue to depend on a nucleus of four undersized divisions with overaged, undertrained, and poorly equipped troops

to stem the mounting tide of insurrection. To its credit, the German High Command eventually did commit some crack German units to the battle against insurgency, but they were never kept in the country long enough to ensure that effective control was restored. However, from the High Command's perspective, rebellion in Yugoslavia was only a minor annoyance when compared to the emerging military catastrophe on the Eastern Front.

The German responsibility for the failure of the major anti-guerrilla operations lies, aside from deploying poor quality troops, in their serious underestimation of the Partisans' tactical skill, which, in turn, led to their failure in studying the enemy's methods. Much of this was due to the German High Command's relative inexperience in the field of counter-insurgency. As a result,

> They did not supply their troops at that time with some sort of blueprint for anti-partisan warfare, which would set out the advisible tactical methods adapted to the various possibilities in band warfare. The troops, being left to their own devices in this fight, were like an army without a field manual. They had to improve their battle technique and their success remained limited.11

A prime example of how slow the Germans adapted their tactics to suit those of the enemy was in their use of encirclement in five out of the seven major anti-guerrilla operations carried out in Yugoslavia. While encirclement proved to be an effective tactic in medium-sized anti-guerrilla operations over a relatively small area, it seldom proved successful when used as the basis of a largescale anti-guerrilla operation.[12] Troops engaged in such an operation over greater distances and varying terrain could not always advance at the same speed, and gaps were created in the ring which the enemy could escape through.[13] This serious drawback in the use of the encirclement tactic on a large scale was clearly illustrated in both major anti-guerrilla operations of 1942,

and yet the Germans continued to use the same tactic in even bigger operations in 1943. Only in 1944, with "Operation Knight's Move", did the Germans finally employ different tactics, but by then it was far too late.

Responsibility for the Axis failure to suppress insurgency must also rest with Germany's Axis occupation partners and their quisling supporters. The Bulgarian units deployed in occupation duty in Serbia appear to have carried out their responsibilities quite well until the end of 1943, when increasing numbers of Communist-indoctrinated troops began to desert to join the Partisans. Those Bulgarian forces who played minor roles in "Operations White and Black" seem to have performed their assignments in a fairly competent, if unspectacular, manner. However, the same cannot be said of Italian units in Yugoslavia, who had already demonstrated clear signs of war-weariness and apathy by early 1942. Their plodding and unenthusiastic performances allowed the Partisans to escape from converging encirclement rings in the second, third, and fourth major anti-guerrilla operations. However, these Italian forces were somewhat more effective in carrying out basic occupation duties, and, in fact, were under more pressure from insurgents than the Germans were in their occupation area in Serbia, since much of the mountainous Italian occupation territory was a haven for guerrilla fighters.[14]

Most of the Croatian and Serbian quisling units deployed in the fight against insurgents, and in the major anti-guerrilla operations in particular, were generally ineffective. An important exception to this was the 369th Croatian (Legion) Division, which carried out responsible tasks in both "Operations White and Black" and apparently did an adequate job. Ustasha units were also undoubtedly fierce fighters against

guerrillas, but through their widespread and savage atrocities they drove scores of Serbs into the arms of the Partisans. The Germans, to their credit, often worked hard to suppress these acts of brutality by the Ustasha.[15] In essence, the non-German Axis and quisling units in Yugoslavia were greatly inferior even to the German light infantry divisions and, therefore, were of very little value in the fight against insurgency.

Recognition for the Axis lack of success in battling insurrection must also be given to the Partisans, who, during the course of the years 1941 to 1943, came to pose an increasingly serious military and political threat to Axis and quisling dominance of Yugoslavia. Longstanding German fears that the Chetniks were a serious political threat never had a basis in reality. The Chetniks were staunch monarchists whose image of postwar Yugoslavia generally differed little from prewar reality, except that Serbia would play an even more dominant role in Yugoslav life than before. This perception of Yugoslavia had, however, alienated most non-Serbian Yugoslavs before the Axis invasion. On the other hand, the Partisans offered equality to all Yugoslav ethnic groups within the framework of a socialist system of government, which, along with their active fight against the Axis and quisling occupier, brought them a great many more supporters than the Chetniks.

Most of the Partisans' military and political success must be credited to their Communist leadership. Fitzroy Maclean best describes their crucial role in the Partisan resistance movement when he writes

> In guerrilla war, ideas matter more than material resources. Few ideas equal Communism in strength, in persistence, in insidiousness, in its power over the individual. The Communist leaders furnished Partisans with the singleness of purpose, the ruthless determination, and merciless discipline, without

which they could not have survived, still less succeeded, in their object.16

Clearly the most important and vital member of this Communist leadership was Josip Broz Tito. In Tito, says Walter Laqueur, "they had a great political and military leader, imperturbable, a man of iron will, a true believer, yet not a fanatic, a civilian with an uncanny military instinct."[17] Yet despite this outstanding leadership, the Partisans could never have defeated the Axis and quisling forces without the direct intervention of the Soviet Army during the fall of 1944 and, certainly, the Germans could have effortlessly annihilated the Partisan movement had they not been fighting on other fronts. However, the Partisan accomplishments were still considerable. Through their use of guerrilla tactics such as harassing enemy supply lines, carrying out sudden attacks on small enemy formations, creating so-called "liberated territories" where the Axis had no real control, and evading enemy frontal assaults, the Partisans succeeded in keeping the Axis and quisling forces off balance for much of the war.

Keeping in mind the German High Command's view of Yugoslavia as a minor war theater, it would be unrealistic to suggest that the Germans might have achieved victory over the Partisans by pouring in crack German units to back up the harshest means necessary to this end. However, an examination of the major anti-guerrilla operations between 1941 to 1943 points out an important lesson which might have given the Germans a greater advantage in their battle against the Partisans. This lesson was the vital importance of mobility in both guerrilla and anti-guerrilla operations. The decisive role of mobility in anti-guerilla warfare had already been pointed out to the German High Command in mid-1942, when the unidentified Chief of Army Police engaged in fighting Soviet partisans

wrote a report in which he stated

> The main conclusion to be drawn from the experience collected in various largescale actions is that troops must be as mobile as possible and that an efficient reconnaissance organization be established.18

However, in Yugoslavia, "Operation Black" was the first and only major anti-guerrilla operation in which the Germans deployed small, mobile forward units called ranger detachments. The effectiveness of these units was limited because, as Tito explained to Frederick Deakin in 1967, "German forward units were always pressing behind the Yugoslavs and could never move with speed in self-contained columns to attack the Partisan forces from the rear."[19] Whether more widespread use of highly mobile and specially-trained German units might have changed the outcome of insurgency is difficult to say. However, the encirclement operation was clearly not the answer, despite the number of enemy casualties it inflicted.

The German units stationed in Yugoslavia during the Second World War were caught in the unenviable position of having to struggle against insurgency while dealing with the chaos resulting from civil war. These difficulties were compounded by the low quality and strengths of many German divisions in Yugoslavia, and the inferior nature of the vast majority of allied and quisling forces. With all these handicaps, it is not so surprising that the Germans and their supporters eventually lost control in Yugoslavia, but, rather, how they were able to maintain their hold for as long as they did.

NOTES FOR CONCLUSION

[1]Milazzo, p. 170; U.S. Dept. of the Army, p. 65. The ground troops consisted of parts of the 1st Mountain Division and Brandenburg Division, the 202nd Tank Regiment and numerous Croatian troops.

[2]Wolff, p. 228; Macksey, p. 170.

[3]Wolff, p. 228. After this close call, Tito was flown by the British to the Dalmatian island of Vis, where he set up his headquarters under their protection.

[4]Tomasevich, "Yugoslavia during WW II", p. 106.

[5]Tomasevich, The Chetniks, p. 418.

[6]Rich, p. 282. By March 1, 1945, the 114th and 117th Light Infantry Divisions were the only former 700-level divisions still in the Southeastern theater.

[7]Ibid. On March 22, 1945, General Löhr was reappointed Supreme Commander Southeast and Field Marshal von Weichs, whom Hitler felt was too old to command, was placed in the reserves. Richard Brett-Smith, Hitler's Generals (London: Osprey Publishing Ltd., 1976), p. 172; KTB IV/1/1191.

[8]Schraml, p. 297. Of even greater significance to the Partisans than the capture of General Löhr was the apprehension and trial of Draza Mihailovich in June and July 1946. He was found guilty of high treason and executed on July 17, 1946.

[9]Ibid., p. 296-297.

[10]Milazzo, p. 183.

[11]Dixon and Heilbrunn, p. 131.

[12]U.S. War Department Technical Manual, Handbook on German Military Forces (Washington: United States Government Printing Services, 1945, Reprint 1970), p. 52.

[13]Ibid.

[14]Milazzo, p. 58.

[15]German troops were expressly ordered on at least one occasion by the Commander in Serbia, General Paul Bader, that "perpetrated and attempted cruelties by members of the allied troops are to be punished instantly by the severest means possible." Der Komm. Gen. i. Serbien "Richtlinien für die Operationen in Bosnien", April 10, 1942, T501/250/391.

[16]Maclean, p. 331.

[17]Laqueur, p. 216.

[18]Dixon and Heilbrunn, p. 125.

[19]Deakin, Embattled Mountain, p. 97.

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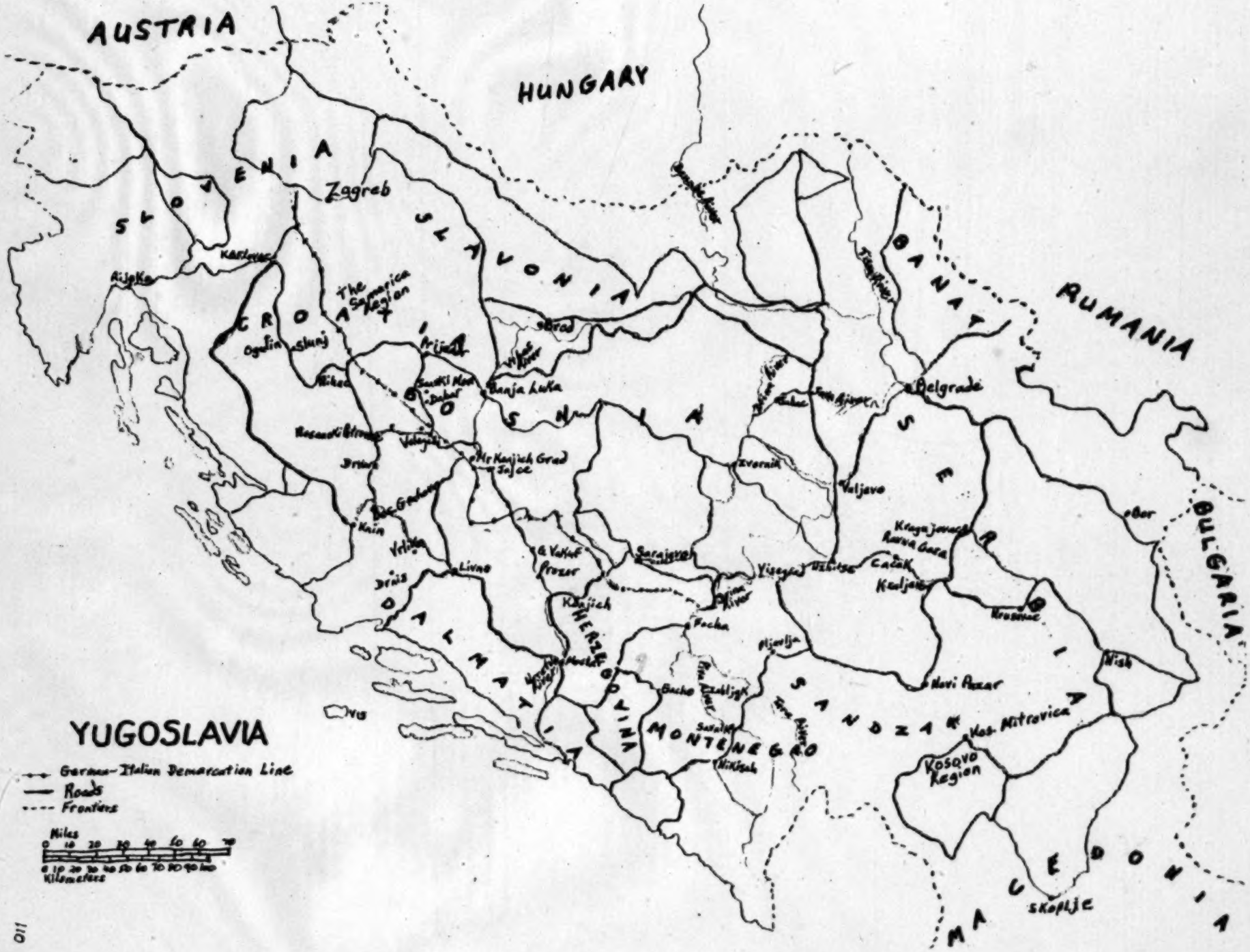
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MONTENEGRO
SANDZAK
MACEDONIA
Zagreb
Belgrade
Sarajevo
Skoplje
Kosovo Region
YUGOSLAVIA
German-Italian Demarcation Line
Roads
Frontiers
Miles
Kilometers

HUNGARY
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Zagreb
SLAVONIA
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Belgrade
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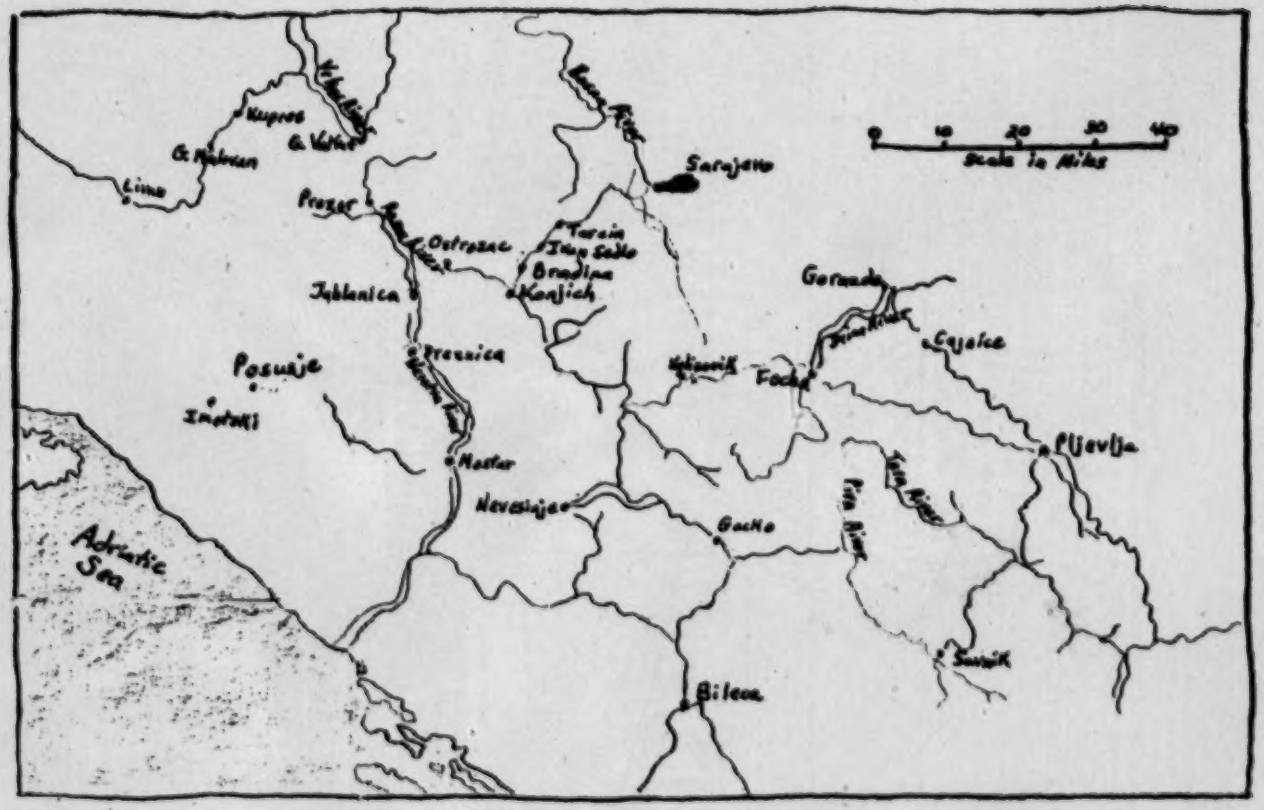
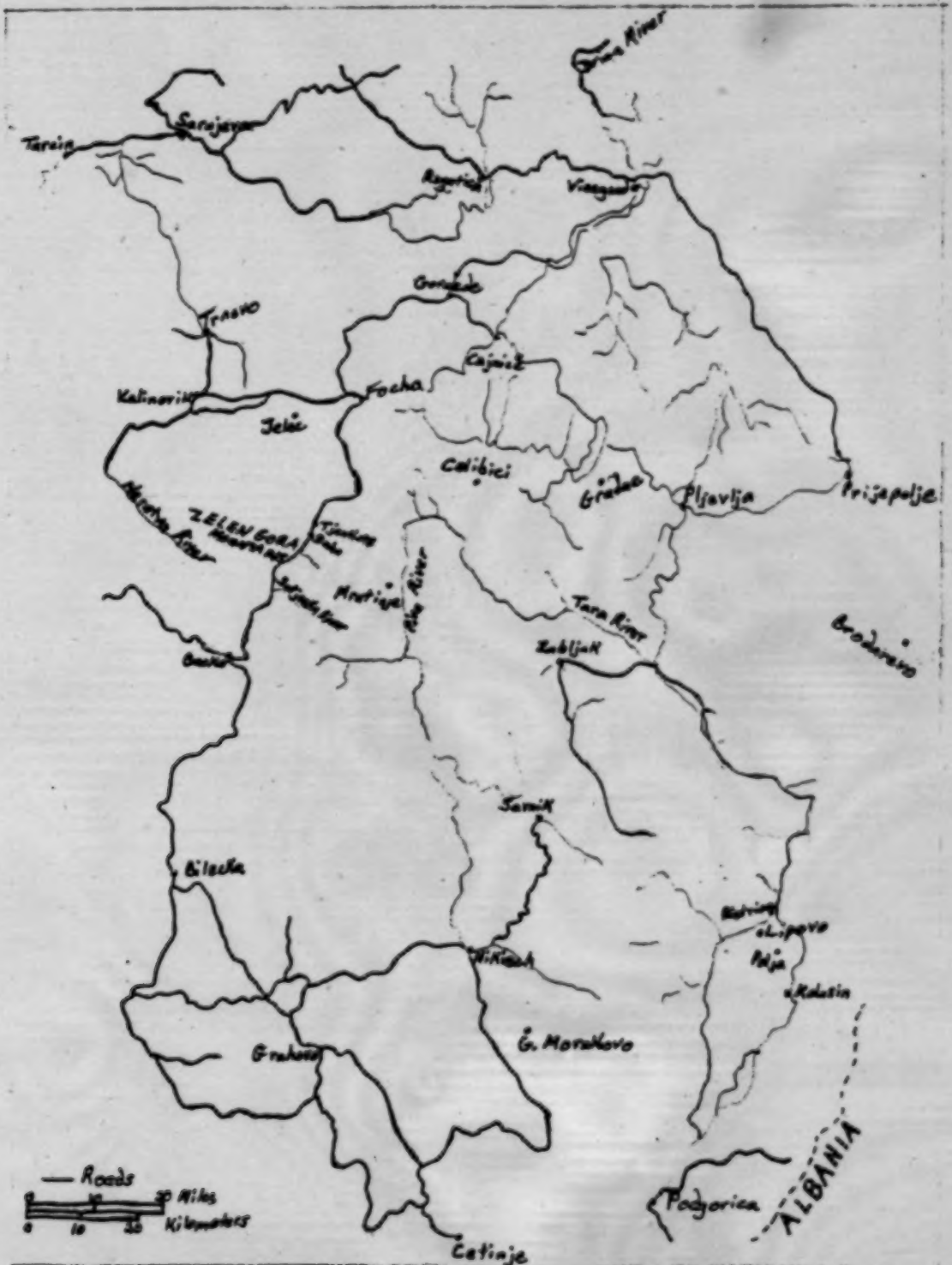
Cacak
Livno
Prozor
Mostar
HERZEGOVINA
Novi Pazar
MONTENEGRO
Vis
Podgorica
ALBANIA
MACEDONIA
GREECE
THE ADMINISTRATIVE AREAS OF AXIS AND QUISLING-OCCUPIED YUGOSLAVIA
Yugoslavian Border 1939
German-Italian Demarcation Line
Border of the Independent State of Croatia
German Military Administration Area
Area Incorporated into the German Reich
Area Annexed by Italy
Area Annexed by Albania
Area Annexed by Hungary
Area Annexed by Bulgaria

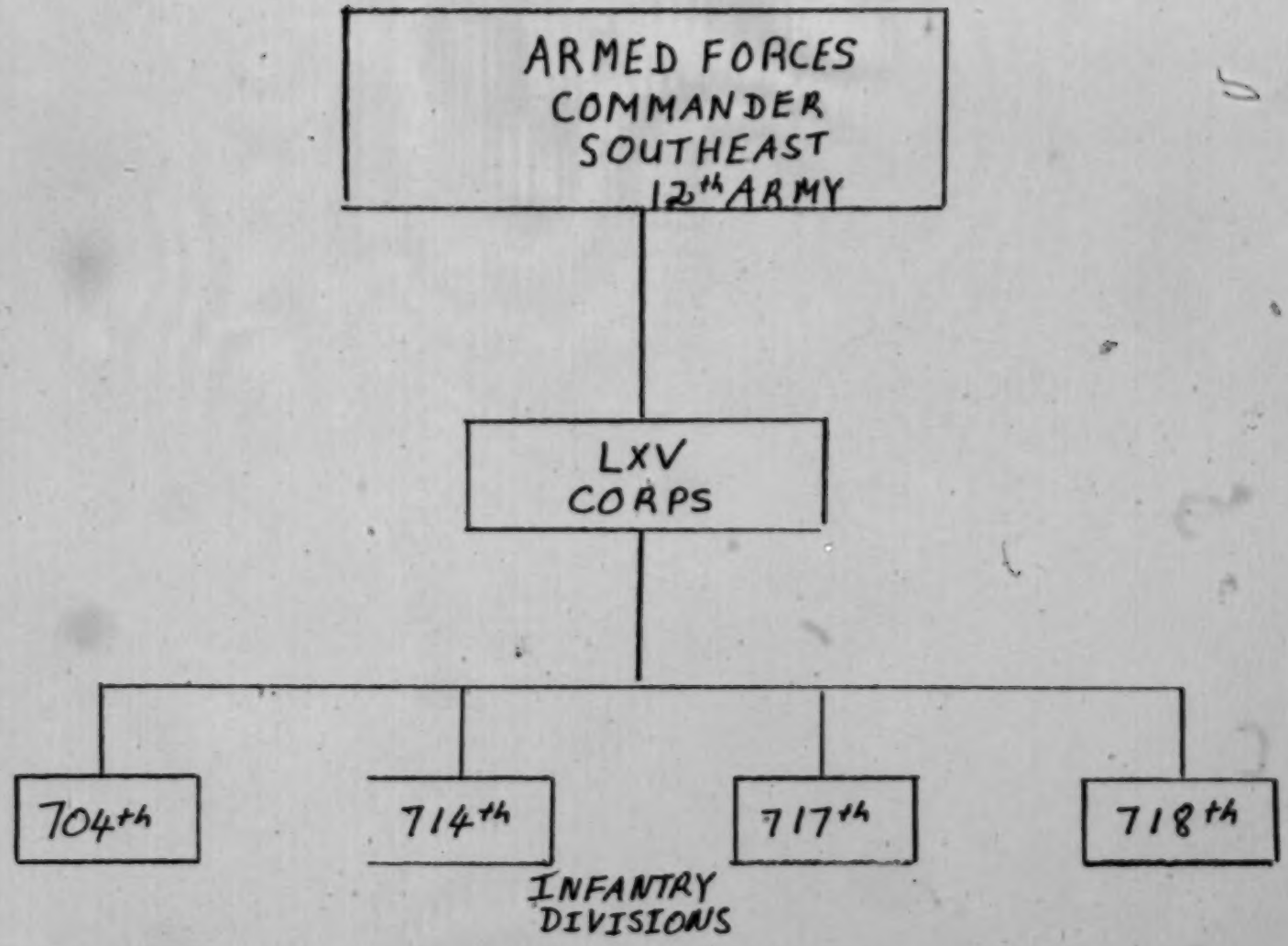
The Operation Area of "White 2"



The Operation Territory of "Operation Black"



GERMAN UNITS IN YUGOSLAVIA JULY, 1941



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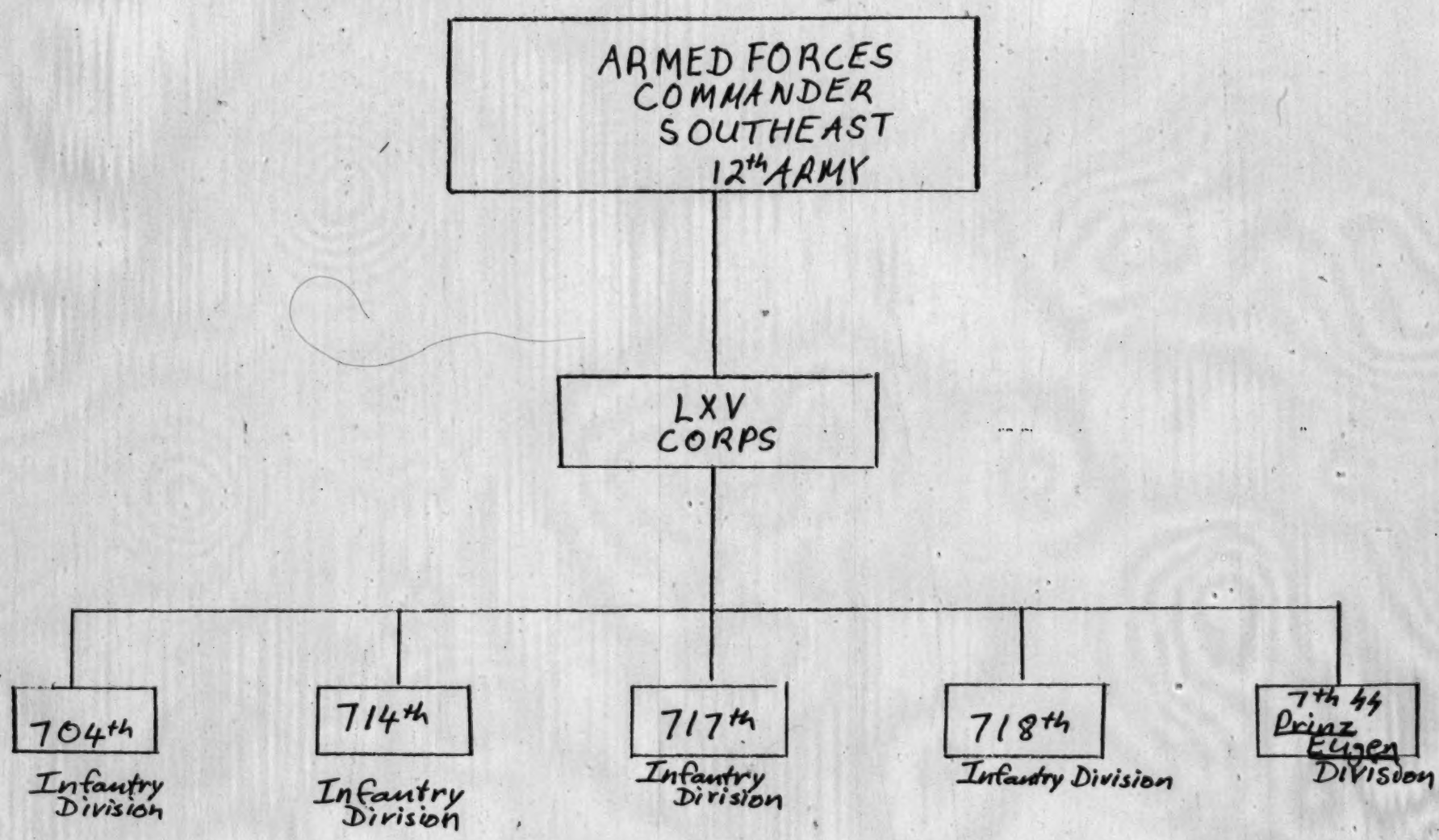

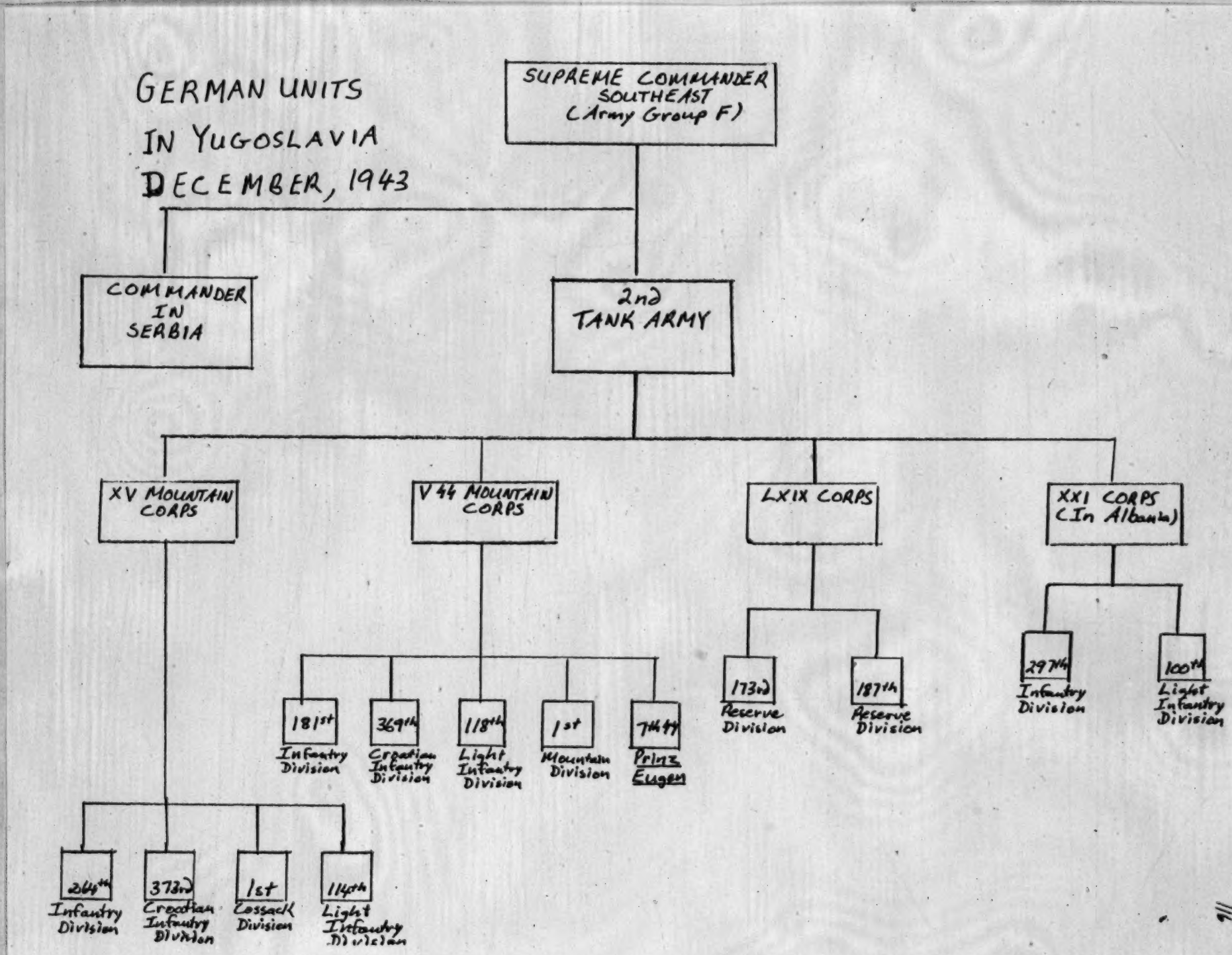
GERMAN UNITS
IN YUGOSLAVIA
DECEMBER, 1943
SUPREME COMMANDER SOUTHEAST (Army Group F)
COMMANDER IN SERBIA
2nd TANK ARMY
XV MOUNTAIN CORPS
V 44 MOUNTAIN CORPS
LXIX CORPS
XXI CORPS (In Albania)
181st Infantry Division
369th Croatian Infantry Division
118th Light Infantry Division
1st Mountain Division
7th SS Prinz Eugen
173rd Reserve Division
187th Reserve Division
297th Infantry Division
100th Light Infantry Division
264th Infantry Division
373rd Croatian Infantry Division
1st Cossack Division
114th Light Infantry Division